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(A)wry Views: Anamorphosis, Cervantes, and the Early Picaresque

David R. Castillo

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(A) WRY VIEWS

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(A)WRY VIEWS

Anamorphosis,
Cervantes, and the
Early Picaresque

David R. Castillo

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A mi querida hija Sophia

*Like perspectives which, rightly gaz'd upon,
Show nothing but confusion, —ey'd awry,
Distinguish form!*

Shakespeare
Richard II

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Introduction

I

In this study, I connect the perspectivistic drive of several Golden Age texts with the aesthetics of anamorphosis, also known as the curious, magic, or secret perspective. The term *anamorphosis* has been utilized in several disciplines, including physics, geometry, architecture, music, decorative and fine arts, and graphic design. As far as I know, Ernest Gilman has to be credited with the first serious appropriation of the concept for the field of literary studies. His book on seventeenth-century English literature, *The Curious Perspective: Literary and Pictorial Wit in the Seventeenth Century* (1978), is an engaging example of interdisciplinary research. In our field there is very little done on the topic, with the exception of a pioneering book by César Nicolás entitled *Estrategias y lecturas: las anamorfosis de Quevedo* (1986).¹ In his study, Nicolás provides a descriptive definition of the term:

La anamorfosis es, pues, un fenómeno óptico producido por un cambio en la perspectiva o punto de vista con que nos aproximamos a una figura; la imagen es distinta según la veamos horizontal o verticalmente, de forma lateral o directa. En cualquier caso, una variación del ángulo de mirada transforma el objeto: la imagen “deforme” supone un doble proceso de apertura y reducción del modelo, de desestructuración y reestructuración sucesivas. (17)

Nicolás follows E. H. Gombrich's conceptualization, which focuses on the impact that such an act of perceptual oscillation may have on the spectator. Faced with unstable and changing images, the spectator is invited to distance himself or herself

from fixed interpretations, and to reflect on the uncertainty and artificial or constructed nature of meaning.

It is important to note that the secret perspective was anything but secret in the early 1600s. Thus, Nicolás recalls that in *El donado hablador*, Jerónimo de Alcalá speaks of a depiction of a skull that, seen from two different oblique angles, would alternately appear as a woman and as a young man. In a book by Culteranist Félix Espinosa y Malo entitled *Ocios morales*, Julián Gállego finds a reference to a similar portrait of a man who becomes a lion and then an eagle as the spectator moves from the front of the painting toward the margins (113). Gállego goes on to note that these anamorphoses (he calls them “*pinturas simultáneas*”) were widely known in the first quarter of the seventeenth century: “[la] pintura simultánea, que pudieramos creer muy de nuestro tiempo [...] era no sólo conocida, sino desdeñada por pasada de moda, ya que esas obras, pintadas sobre ‘ciertas varillas,’ según Alcalá, ‘al principio dieron mucho gusto y se estimaron; pero después, por la abundancia dellas y tenerlas todos, vinieron a valer en muy bajo precio’” (54). According to Nicolás, not only painters and graphic artists but also well-known authors such as Tasso, Marino, and, in Spain, Góngora and Quevedo frequently experimented with anamorphosis.

I am not attempting to establish a genetic line of contact between the literature of the *siglo de oro* and the developments of the secret perspective. Rather, in focusing on the appearance of multiperspectival forms of discourse in the 1500s and early 1600s, my intent is to contribute to a contemporary understanding of their common aesthetic and historical horizon. Thus, I intend to argue that the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Francisco López de Úbeda’s *La pícaro Justina*, and *Don Quixote* and *Persiles*—among other Cervantine texts—challenge well-established beliefs about the world in much the same way that certain forms of perspective anamorphosis reveal the arbitrariness and incompleteness of any total view.

In my research, I draw from traditional and avant-garde approaches to the Spanish Golden Age, and also from cultural criticism, art theory, and the history of mentalities and institutions; yet, my aim is to engage in the close reading of certain

passages and texts characteristic of *siglo de oro* literature while trying not to lose sight of the broader historical and aesthetic developments of the period. In addition, I shall emphasize the significance of today's Golden Age studies in the context of the ongoing debates in the humanities and the social sciences regarding the function of language in the construction of reality, the place of the subject in the practices of authority, and the possibility of discourses of resistance and change.

In responding to the current proliferation of avant-garde approaches to the Spanish Golden Age, Anthony Close has recently cautioned against those antihistoricist tendencies that—he says—are threatening to erase the historical and aesthetic specificity of individual texts. In Spain, José Montero Reguera has expressed similar concerns regarding the use of psychoanalytic and feminist theory for literary analysis. He argues that those scholars who are influenced by avant-garde theory—especially current psychoanalysis and feminism—are often guilty of maintaining “an excessive distance” from the text (177–78). While I would share with these critics a sense of caution as well as an awareness of the importance of historical specificity, I would also recall the words of Funes el memorioso, one of Jorge Luis Borges's self-conscious narrators: “pensar es olvidar diferencias, es generalizar, abstraer” (123).

At stake in this debate is the ultimate question with which any historical discourse has to deal, i.e., the fundamental issue of the production of meaning. José Antonio Maravall pointed to the heart of the question already in his *Teoría del saber histórico* (1959) in which he observed that “no conocemos nunca puramente un sistema objetivo de fenómenos, puesto que en cuanto se fija la observación en él, resulta alterado; lo que nos es accesible ha sido creado, por lo menos en cierto modo, en el proceso de la observación” (120).² In our time, Maravall's insightful reflections on the impossibility of a clean, objective, or noncontaminated glance at the past are echoed everywhere from history to literary criticism to sociology and cultural studies. A rather eloquent formulation of this idea may be found in Slavoj Žižek's best-known work *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989). In discussing the production of meaning in analysis (psychoanalysis as well as cultural and historical analysis),

Žižek insists that “symptoms are meaningless traces, their meaning is not discovered, excavated from the hidden depth of the past, but constructed retroactively” (*The Sublime* 55–56).

My understanding of the Spanish Golden Age is informed by Maravall’s conceptualization of the baroque as a “historical structure” marked by the presence of a “guided culture” (“la cultura dirigida del barroco”). Maravall’s notion of historical structure may be seen as a correlate of the linguistic concept of semantic field:

Estructura histórica [...] es, por tanto, un sistema de relaciones dentro del cual cada hecho adquiere su sentido en función de todos los otros con los que se halla en conexión. Entre los hechos de una estructura se constituye, no un nexo causal, sino una relación situacional [...] Esos conjuntos estructurados en los que se conectan los datos de un lenguaje son llamados hoy por los lingüistas, tomando la palabra del dominio de la física nueva, “campos” semánticos [...] En todo caso importa observar, con Ullman, que esa estructura de un campo refleja la mentalidad de cada época, pero al mismo tiempo influye sobre esa mentalidad, imponiéndole un análisis peculiar del mundo. (*Teoría* 188–91)

At this level, Maravall’s method of historical inquiry may be said to parallel the methodology of Lacanian analysis. While psychoanalytic criticism seeks to determine the function of semiotic units by delimiting their position in the symbolic field, Maravall maintains that the historian must aim to establish the coordinates of each particular datum in a historical structure: “establecer el sistema de relaciones de un hecho dentro de un campo o de una estructura histórica” (*Teoría* 71). In fact, both Jacques Lacan and Maravall coincide in calling attention to the presence of a stable point of reference in every symbolic field or system of beliefs. This master signifier—Lacan calls it “point de capiton”—is said to function as an anchoring point that retroactively fixates the meaning of every element of the symbolic constellation.³ As Maravall puts it in *Utopía y contrautopía en el “Quijote”*: “en todo sistema de creencias hay una que posee el carácter de eje en torno al cual las demás giran y se articulan” (195).

In early modern Spain the notion of honor appears to constitute one such anchoring point of the symbolic field, as the

semiotic code of the Lopean *comedia* would seem to indicate. I shall argue that *Lazarillo de Tormes* and the *comedias* and interludes of Miguel de Cervantes reveal the dark side of honor from the margins inhabited by those who are excluded from the social fantasy (most notoriously *moriscos* and *conversos*). In *El retablo de las maravillas*, for example, Cervantes re-enacts the traditional belief in the essential superiority of the Christian heritage and the Jew's lack of honor from an oblique or anamorphic perspective that reduces this Christian myth to ashes.

One of the critics who have most extensively researched the history of the Jewish question in the context of medieval and early modern Spain is of course Américo Castro. The present book benefits greatly from his insights into the often violent process of construction of the Spanish nation, especially in *España en su historia: cristianos, moros y judíos*, *De la edad conflictiva: crisis de la cultura española*, and *Origen, ser y existir de los españoles*. At the core of Castro's historiographic program is the firm conviction that Spain must face the traumatic truth of its founding act: the exclusion of the Jews and Muslims. Consequently, Castro aimed to undermine the essentialist myth of "an always-already Spanish Catholic subject"; a notion to which many intellectuals had adhered in the second quarter of the twentieth century and which decisively contributed to the consolidation of Franco's reactionary dictatorship.

A good example of this essentialist view may be found in Ernesto Giménez Caballero's *Genio de España* (1932). In his book the founder and director of *La Gaceta Literaria*—one of the leading literary journals of the 1920s—aims to define "the Catholic and Imperial spirit of Spain" ("el genio de España, católico e imperial") against a "bastard materialist tradition." According to Giménez Caballero, the other Spain ("la España bastarda") begins with the irony of Cervantes and culminates in the literature of the Generation of 1898 and the essays of José Ortega y Gasset, which—he says—are "the wounds through which the nation is losing its spiritual blood" ("boquetes por donde empieza a derramarse la sangre espiritual de la nación").⁴

The notion of a peculiar Spain founded on a sense of unity of mission has been central to the historiographic work of several Hispanists, most notably Claudio Sánchez Albornoz.

Positioning himself against this tradition, the exiled Américo Castro aimed to deconstruct the historiographic myth of a monolithic ethnic and religious identity. While Castro's studies hinge on the official practices of exclusion and marginalization of social elements on the basis of the "blood factor,"⁵ Maravall focuses on other dimensions of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century campaigns of national construction, especially the institutional push to create and propagate a system of representations that portrays submission to public authority as a religious duty.⁶

Despite their different focus, both Castro and Maravall coincide in pointing out that certain Golden Age writers resist the pressures of the Counter-Reformation and the homogenizing drive of official culture. One such writer is the author of *Don Quixote* who, Castro says, negated the myths of his time (*Hacia Cervantes* 225). Similarly, Maravall reads *Don Quixote* as a demystifying narrative that ridicules the evasive tendencies of imperial and Counter-Reformation utopias. According to Maravall, Cervantes accomplishes his demystifying objectives by creating a dual perspective: "Despues de hecho el montaje de su mundo utópico apoyado en la voluntad transformadora de su personaje central, Cervantes da la vuelta a su punto de vista y, contemplando su creación bajo el prisma de la ironía, convierte aquella en lo contrario de lo que pudo ser. Hace de ella finalmente una contra-utopía" (*Utopía* 240).

Cervantes's narrative strategy would thus parallel the perspective reversal that is characteristic of anamorphosis. Gustav Hocke has suggested that anamorphic devices invite spectators to alter their perception of the world by forcing them to reverse their understanding of what they see. Thus, according to Hocke, the main purpose of anamorphosis is "volver todas las cosas del revés" in order to produce a sense of confusion: "una continua confusión entre el ser y la apariencia" (239). This observation may allow us to connect—as Hocke does—the anamorphic mode of representation with the developments of mannerism, and with Cartesian epistemology: "Desde 1600 hasta pasado el 1660, en la cumbre del Manierismo de entonces, pasará la anamorfosis a ser la gran moda, al igual que el conceptismo en la poesía, el madrigalismo polifacético con su provocativa cromática y con sus disonancias en la música,

como la duda metódica sobre la realidad del mundo aparente (Cartesianismo)” (241). From this standpoint, the *concetti* of Tesauro and Gracián, for example, could be said to evoke the *magia anamorphotica* created by the visual puzzles gathered by Nicéron, Mersenne, Maignan, Desargues, Huret, and Schott, among others (Hocke 242).

In his classic book *La ambigüedad en el “Quijote,”* Manuel Durán maintains that *Don Quixote* is a product of a vast historical zone of uncertainty that crystallizes during the Renaissance in and around the discovery of modern perspective and the proliferation of multiple viewpoints.⁷ Contrary to those who see the Renaissance as an epoch defined by man’s supreme confidence in his ability to apprehend the world around him, Durán sees it as a period of confusion, uncertainty, and instability.⁸ Consequently, his account of the perspective developments of the 1500s does not focus (as is usually the case) on the discovery of the Albertian totalizing view, which depends on a central single viewpoint.⁹ Rather, he chooses to emphasize the appearance of multiple viewpoints, which are the trademark of the wry images and aberrations associated with the secret or curious perspective.

Durán’s argument is consistent with Hocke’s observations regarding the function of anamorphosis and, especially, with Gombrich’s theorization of its characteristic ambiguity: “la ambigüedad [...] no puede nunca ser vista en cuanto tal. Sólo nos fijamos en ella cuando aprendemos a pasar de una lectura a otra, y al advertir que ambas interpretaciones encajan igualmente bien con la imagen” (220). In this sense, the long-lived historiographic standoff between the “soft” and “hard” *quijotistas* could be seen as a tribute to the anamorphic quality of Cervantes’s text (see Montero Reguera 202).

Leo Spitzer was one of the first in calling attention to the novel’s perspectivism, which he associated with the baroque motif of “engaño-desengaño.” This connection may still be useful as long as we stay away from a clear-cut moralistic interpretation of the popular baroque motif, for—as Durán notes—Cervantes is not opposing the deceptive appearances of this life to the firm certainty of the afterlife (that might be Calderón); he is simply superimposing veils, uncertainties, and reservations: “Cervantes, en cambio, acumula los velos, las

Introduction

incertidumbres, las reservas; complica las relaciones, como en uno de esos fotomontajes surrealistas en que la multiplicidad de líneas y el encabalgamiento de las imágenes impide hallar un sólo sistema de perspectivas desde el cual entender la totalidad de la composición” (101–02).

Durán relates Cervantes’s perspectivism to the superimposition of images that is characteristic of surrealist aesthetics. Speaking of the anamorphic portrait *The Ambassadors* (1533) by Hans Holbein, Lacan also recalls the dreamlike images of surrealist painting (see *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, chapter 7). Lacan sees a remarkable similarity between Salvador Dalí’s soft watches in *The Persistence of Memory* (1931) and the enigmatic skull that appears in Holbein’s portrait when one gazes at the painting from an oblique angle (see illustrations 1 and 2). In her recent study *Dalí’s Optical Illusions* (2000), Dawn Ades notes that Holbein’s unsettling skull “was to haunt Dalí” (21). In effect, the presence of Holbein’s suspended skull is clearly apparent in many of Dalí’s early paintings, including *Diurnal Fantasies* (1931), *Atmospheric Skull Sodomizing a Grand Piano* (1934), and *Skull with Its Lyric Appendage Leaning on a Night Table Which Should Have the Exact Temperature of a Cardinal Bird’s Nest* (1934), among others.

As a matter of fact, this connection between Dalí’s work and sixteenth-century anamorphosis was first noted in a 1929 review that placed Dalí’s *Bathers* alongside the anonymous *Saint Anthony of Padua* (1535). Ades observes apropos this review that “the immediate visual effect of the resemblance between the melting morphology of the bodies in Dalí’s painting and the distortions of the anamorphic image was arresting and certainly intentional on the part of the review’s editor” (22–23). Other art theorists have noted this connection between the early anamorphoses of the 1500s and 1600s, and Dalí’s distorted objects and bodies (see, for example, Hocke 235 and 248). They have not failed to point out that, in the face of this type of perspective illusionism, twentieth-century spectators share with their sixteenth- and seventeenth-century counterparts the experience of uncertainty as “viewer and subject become entangled in a dance of displaced positions, in which there is no clear resolution” (Ades 20).

Much of what Ades says about Dalí's surrealism and about the early experiments with anamorphosis rings true for the work of Cervantes as well. Indeed, the superimposition of perspectives, which is—as Durán argues—an essential characteristic of the Cervantine style, may result in a radical questioning of “reality.” As Ades notes regarding Dalí's realization of the potentially troubling effect of anamorphosis:

Dalí recognized that the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theories of perspective were wrestling with the problem of marrying empirical observation of the natural world with the belief in a world beyond it. Reality, in other words, was a contestable issue, and such inventions as anamorphic perspective, as we shall see, posited a “hidden reality” which was to suggest analogies with the unknowable of the unconscious. (17)

We shall get back to this subject in our discussion of *Don Quixote*, *Persiles*, and *El retablo de las maravillas*. Here, I would simply like to dramatize the subversive potential of this type of perspectivism by way of a quick reference to Federico García Lorca's well-known surrealist book *Poeta en Nueva York*, which clearly employs anamorphic techniques. Let us recall the following verses from the poem “New York: Oficina y denuncia”: “Debajo de las multiplicaciones / hay una gota de sangre de pato. / Debajo de las divisiones / hay una gota de sangre de marinero. / Debajo de las sumas, un río de sangre tierna” (132). On the surface, we see neutral arithmetic operations; on another (“originally hidden”) level, however, there is nothing but the tender blood of their innocent victims. I see a similar superimposition of images at work in many of Cervantes's texts and also in the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* and López de Úbeda's *La pícaro Justina*.

While *Poeta en Nueva York* denounces the violence of institutionalized power from an oblique perspective that allows us to see the dark side of capitalism, *Lazarillo de Tormes* challenges the reader to gaze at the Spanish society of the mid-1600s from the marginal position of the dispossessed. In reading Lázaro's life story, I am often reminded of the narrator of Julio Cortázar's “Axolotl” and his growing fascination with those mysterious eyes of the ajolote, which suggest a different

way of seeing: “Los ojos de los axolotl me decían de la presencia de una vida diferente, de otra manera de mirar” (152). We may recall the transformation that takes place at the end of Cortázar’s story: “Veía de muy cerca la cara de un axolotl inmóvil junto al vidrio. Sin transición, sin sorpresa, vi mi cara contra el vidrio, en vez del axolotl vi mi cara contra el vidrio, la vi fuera del acuario, la vi del otro lado del vidrio” (154). As in Cortázar’s well-known story, in Lázaro’s autobiographical narrative we are invited, or rather challenged, to see things from “the other side of the glass.” Through the eyes of the *pícaro*—and through the eyes of Don Quixote as well—we may see the world differently and, perhaps more importantly, we may realize that there are other “ways of seeing.”

To be sure, in my discussion of the early picaresque and Cervantes’s writing, I intend to show that the superimposition of images, which is a characteristic feature of Renaissance and baroque perspectivism (and also of *siglo de oro* literature), may indeed make us more aware of the fact that “what we see” is to a certain extent a function of “our way of seeing” and, consequently, of “who we are and/or want to be.” According to Gombrich this is the central revelation of anamorphosis: “Es la fuerza de la expectativa, más que la del conocimiento conceptual, lo que moldea lo que vemos en la vida, no menos que en el arte” (198). Justina makes this same point in shockingly explicit terms in López de Úbeda’s work: “les quiero contar, muy de espacio, no tanto lo que vi [...], cuanto el modo con que lo vi, porque he dado en que me lean el alma” (ed. Damiani 322). While we will return to this passage in chapter 3, it is important to note here that Justina identifies her “way of seeing” with the essence of who she is, i.e., with her very soul.

II

In his brief but enlightening discussion of anamorphosis in *La cultura del barroco*, Maravall focuses on the incomplete character of anamorphic devices, which—he says—always call for the spectator’s intervention to compose or recompose the picture in his/her own fashion (441–42). This argument is consistent with Fred Leeman’s account of the origin of the term: “Indeed, the etymological origin of the word—from the Greek

ana (again), morphe (shape)—indicates that the spectator must play a part and re-form the picture himself” (9). Both Maravall and Leeman draw from Jurgis Baltrušaitis’s book *Anamorphoses ou magie artificielle des effets merveilleux* (1969), available in English with the title *Anamorphic Art* (1977).¹⁰

According to Baltrušaitis, the word *anamorphosis* was first used by Gaspar Schott in his *Magia universalis* (1657–59); yet, the term was applied to a range of perspective aberrations and curiosities whose origins must be traced back to the early Renaissance. The first known example of anamorphosis dates from 1485. It consists of two distorted sketches by Leonardo da Vinci that, when viewed from the right-hand side, can be recognized as a baby’s head and an eye. Much more perfected are the anamorphic images designed by Albrecht Dürer’s disciple Erhard Schön, a graphic artist and engraver who worked in Nuremberg in the second quarter of the sixteenth century.

We know of four anamorphic designs by Schön, which have been dated between 1531 and 1538. Two of them are woodcuts of historical theme. The second of these large woodcuts alternately hides and reveals portraits of Emperor Charles V, his brother Ferdinand of Austria, Pope Paul III, and King Francis I against the background of a bizarre landscape. These phantom-like images of royal effigies—they are only visible from left and right—projected over countries and historical events represent a desideratum of the absolutist monarchy. The extraordinary frequency with which Charles V is represented in anamorphic compositions has led some experts—Baltrušaitis among them—to link the early developments of anamorphosis to the Emperor’s courtly circle. In Spain, Baltrušaitis documents the existence of a well-known anamorphic portrait of Charles V in the cathedral of Palencia.

The proliferation of these images in the second half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century suggests that the fantasy of an omnipresent king hovering over land and people is central to the imagery associated with the establishment of the absolutist state. This is consistent with the omnipresence of the royal seal, which literally becomes an object of veneration all across absolutist Europe.¹¹ While the royal seal was to be kept from public view, its printed images

allowed for the symbolic presence of the monarch throughout his possessions. Moreover, new mapmaking techniques signal the appearance of a conception of the state as the body of the king.¹² One of the most interesting cartographic representations of the period is the map of central Europe commissioned by Charles V in 1560. Here, the land is literally converted into an emblem of monarchical power as mountains, rivers, and towns re-compose the body of the double-headed eagle, the heraldic emblem of the Habsburg dynasty.

Maravall focuses precisely on this connection between anamorphosis and the emblem in his account of the deployment of visual media in Counter-Reformation Spain (see chapter 8 of *La cultura del barroco*). He argues that the visual puzzles associated with anamorphosis and the emblem (*empresa*) served a pedagogical function in the baroque period. In effect, in the hands of Spanish intellectuals such as Saavedra Fajardo visual rarities became an instrument of political propaganda and religious indoctrination that demanded the spectator's participation; or, as Maravall says, "un procedimiento a través del cual se pretende que lo inacabado lleve a la suspensión, a la intervención activa del público y al contagio y acción psicológica sobre éste, que le inclina hacia unos objetivos hacia los que se quiere dirigirle" (*La cultura* 442).

The use of anamorphosis for pedagogical purposes—especially for religious education—is well documented by Baltrušaitis in *Anamorphoses*. The above-mentioned painting *Saint Anthony of Padua* (anonymous, 1535) is an early example of this religious use of anamorphosis. The composition incorporates an oblique perspective that reveals a portrait of Saint Anthony kneeling before Jesus. Baltrušaitis mentions many similar depictions that document the remarkable success of anamorphosis during the 1500s and the 1600s all throughout Europe. Among them, the 1638 engraving by J. H. Glaser shows, perhaps better than any other, the pedagogical potential of this mode of representation.¹³ Baltrušaitis describes the composition as follows:

In *The Fall* [...] Adam and Eve, tasting the fruit, are on the right-hand side of a long, narrow composition. *The Expulsion from Paradise*, is on the opposite side. A lake stretches

between the two scenes; in the foreground are animals and birds of every species; in the background, exotic trees. The scene appears normal, except that the water, which should be calm in this landscape of Paradise, is strangely agitated and seems to be concealing human features. The waves are explained when one looks at them sideways: from them emerges the head of the suffering Christ, the compassionate Christ with the Crown of Thorns [the head of Christ is most visible from the right]. The Redeemer makes his appearance as far back as the Original Sin. (*Anamorphic Art* 26)

The hidden presence of Christ in the scene of the Fall suggests that God had envisioned the instrument of our salvation already before Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Thus, Glaser uses anamorphosis to illustrate the idea that God had never truly abandoned his people, even if it seemed that way at the time of the Fall. Of interest to us is that Baltrušaitis connects these anamorphoses with the developments of mannerism.

One can certainly sense a resemblance between many of these anamorphic visions and, for example, El Greco's "imágenes oníricas"—as Gregorio Marañón calls them—in *El apocalypses*. While his superimposition of earthly and supernatural scenes in paintings such as *El entierro del conde de Orgaz* may remind us of Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, my impression is that El Greco comes even closer to the anamorphic form in his spiritualized landscapes of Toledo, especially in the composition entitled *Vista y plano de Toledo*. Here, the entire upper half of the painting is occupied by a celestial group that has been arranged in such a way as to evoke the shape of a cloud. This image is reminiscent of the anthropomorphic landscapes that are perhaps the most popular anamorphic compositions of this period.

Ernest Gilman distinguishes between a mannerist phase of anamorphosis and a baroque phase. He associates the mannerist phase with the "reverse perspectives" mentioned by Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo in his *Treatise on Painting* (1584). According to Gilman, "Lomazzo's emphasis on the enigmas of perspective manipulation reflects the problematic, unsettling quality of Mannerist painting" (51). On the other hand, he identifies the developments gathered in the work of seventeenth-century

“perspecteurs,” especially Nicéron and Dubreuil, with the baroque style, which—in his view—shifted emphasis “from the desire to provoke a perceptual uncertainty to the pleasures of resolving it” (51–52). Gilman coincides with Maravall in pointing out that the emblem, and also certain forms of baroque theater and literature, ought to be re-examined in connection with these latter developments. This idea is consistent with Baltrušaitis’s observation that in the 1600s anamorphosis came to be used as a reminder “of the uncertainty of appearances which, in religious thought, corresponds to the idea of the inconstancy and the vanity of this world” (*Anamorphic Art* 70).

Vanities and images of “desengaño” can be found everywhere in seventeenth-century Spain, from the gloomy paintings of Juan de Valdés Leal, to Lopean and Calderonian productions, to the poetry of Quevedo and Góngora, and the best-selling picaresque novels of the early 1600s. As Maravall says about baroque desengaño: “lo que nos parece una hermosa doncella es, al descubrirse, figura de la muerte; lo que estimamos una riqueza codiciable, resulta luego en verdad un vano objeto de desprecio” (*Utopía* 152). This was also the revelation of Holbein’s anamorphic portrait *The Ambassadors*, which according to Baltrušaitis would be at the height of its appreciation in the seventeenth century. The ghostly skull that smears the portrait of the two French ambassadors is intended to remind us of the fact that earthly possessions, power, and knowledge are nothing but illusions that hide the face of death. Similarly, the narrator of *Guzmán de Alfarache* would see himself as a “watchtower of human life” (“atalaya de la vida humana”), a preacher whose mission is to warn readers against the temptations of the flesh and the deceptions of the physical world. I shall argue that the “watchtower” whose vigilant presence so deeply marks the work of Mateo Alemán, and also the commanding authorial voice in López de Úbeda’s *La pícara Justina*, are posited as “morally correct perspectives” that emerge anamorphically against the background of fading “picaresque view-points.”

At the same time, as Durán reminds us, one has to be careful not to conflate this moralistic drive with Cervantes’s perspectivism, which underscores the problematic nature of representation and the ultimate impossibility of a totalizing view of

reality. In this sense, if we were to accept Gilman's distinction between the mannerist and the baroque usage of perspective, the writing of Cervantes would seem closer to the unsettling quality of mannerist painting. Julio Baena makes this point in his recent book on *Persiles* when he argues that Cervantes's novel is structured around the principle $n+1$ ("principio diferidor"), in which the cipher (1) would stand in place of the absent element of any given totality (n). Baena links this "principio diferidor" to the mannerist aesthetics of El Greco: "De la misma manera que el Greco alargaba las figuras por insatisfacción con los paradigmas y cánones tanto de la naturaleza como de la estética en ella basada, ese uno sobrante del texto del *Persiles* [...] se coloca casi en primer plano de la escena, en un escorzo, un intento de alcanzar el elemento siempre ausente de una totalidad" (72).

As a matter of fact, Cervantes's playful style seems to have much more in common with Schön's early experiments with anamorphosis, especially with his humorous compositions *Was siehst du?* and *Aus, du alter Tor!* which fit well within the medieval and Low Renaissance traditions of the carnivalesque and the grotesque (see illustrations 3 and 4).¹⁴ The following is from Bartsch's eloquent description of these anamorphoses:

1. A very large piece showing on the left Jonah coming out of the whale. All the rest of the print is filled with apparently meaningless scribble, but which, viewed obliquely, with the eye practically on a level with the picture, shows a man satisfying his needs and this inscription: WAS SIEHST DU [WHAT DO YOU SEE?] [...] 2. Another similar piece which on the left shows a shameless woman surreptitiously passing to her lover the money she is stealing from the purse of an old man who is caressing her. All the rest of the piece is similarly filled with scribble, which, foreshortened, shows a very lewd scene and these words: AUS, DU ALTER TOR [OUT, YOU OLD FOOL!]. (Qtd. in Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphic Art* 12)

While the second scene is thematically reminiscent of Cervantes's *Entremés del viejo celoso*, I am especially interested in Schön's shocking depiction of the biblical episode of Jonah coming out of the whale. The inscription "What do you see?"

invites the reader to reflect upon the very mechanism that makes the picture work. A casual—straight on—look at the scene will reveal nothing but the traditional (official) version of the events. But if we were to look at it again from an oblique perspective we would see a rather different picture!

The superimposition of viewpoints, which illustrates the distance between “high” and “low” culture, results in an (a)wry image that reduces the biblical episode to raw laughing matter. In this sense, Schön’s composition may be said to reveal the destabilizing and even subversive potential of anamorphosis simply by re-stating its formal principle, i.e., by underscoring the fact that what the spectator sees depends on his/her point of view. We will see this same principle at work in many of Cervantes’s texts, and also in certain passages of *Lazarillo* and *La pícara Justina*.

On the other hand, Cervantes’s experimental narrative style is often reminiscent of Velázquez’s “technique of incompleteness”—as Maravall puts it. Today, it is something of a commonplace to speak of Velázquez’s “unfinished” and “careless” painting. Yet, the anamorphic quality of Velázquez’s technique is often unrecognized. Maravall has called attention to this aspect in *La cultura del barroco* where he maintains that all painting of splotches (he specifically recalls the work of Velázquez) is in a sense an *anamorphosis* that invites the spectator to complete the picture: “Toda la pintura de manchas o ‘borrones,’ de pinceladas distantes, etc., es, en cierta medida, una ‘anamorfosis,’ que reclama sea recompuesta la imagen por la intervención del espectador” (441–42).

In chapter 7 of his book on the curious perspective, Ernest Gilman focuses on Velázquez’s perspectivism and on Andrew Marvell’s “perspectives of the mind.” He explicitly connects Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* with Holbein’s *The Ambassadors*:

In the mirror images, puzzles, and confusions in point of view of *Las Meninas* Velázquez achieves the same effect—though in a less somber mood—as Holbein does with the anamorphic skull in *The Ambassadors*. Velázquez creates illusory representations of reality which call attention to their own double nature [...His painting] reveals a shifting, tricky world in whose uncertainties the beholder is now a participant rather than a privileged observer. (215)

While I would relate the “somber mood” of Holbein’s portrait to a moralistic drive that is absent from Velázquez’s painting, Gilman does well in pointing out that both portraits create a sense of uncertainty since the spectator is no longer able to grasp the meaning of the picture from a secure vantage point. Moreover, the beholder is now pulled into the shifting world of the painting whose boundaries seem unstable (see illustration 5). James Parr (1988) noted this connection between *Don Quixote* and *Las Meninas*: “Anyone who has read the *Quixote* knows that the textual boundary is extremely porous, that Cervantes is both inside and outside his creation simultaneously, not unlike Velázquez in *Las Meninas*” (6).

According to Ortega y Gasset, Velázquez reveals in his painting that reality differs from myth in that it is incomplete: “La realidad se diferencia del mito en que no está nunca acabada” (qtd. in Maravall, *La cultura* 443n52). I shall argue a similar point concerning the writing of Cervantes. My contention is that Cervantes’s interest in “the incomplete” goes well beyond the traditional obsession with the deceiving nature of appearances and the instability of the physical world, if only because he does not draw moralistic conclusions from the experience of uncertainty. Far from it, Cervantes focuses on “the incomplete” in order to rethink the nature of representation (literary and otherwise) and to challenge the reader to reflect on the arbitrariness of commonly held beliefs about the world—including well-established Christian notions.

In closing this introductory section I would like to suggest that interdisciplinary and comparative approaches should be particularly useful for the study of Renaissance and baroque literature all across Europe for, as Ernest Gilman reminds us, in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries, artists and writers constantly “perceived and created connections among the arts” (6). While I am, of course, aware of the distinctiveness of the realm of writing and of the historical specificity of the Spanish Golden Age, I am also convinced that a wider contextualization of *siglo de oro* literature in connection with the developments of Renaissance and baroque perspective will enrich our understanding of some of its most recurrent themes and formal patterns.

Part 1

The Picaresque

*Por mí digo
que esto de ver cosas curiosas y con curiosidad
es para mí manjar del alma.*

López de Úbeda
La pícara Justina

Chapter One

Putting Things in Anamorphic Perspective

The Case of *Lazarillo*

Lázaro in the New World Dis-order

In his studies on geometrical perspective, Leon Battista Alberti contradicts the Scholastic notion according to which figures must be organized hierarchically in reference to their place in the theological cosmos, more than a century before the publishing of Copernicus's *De revolutionibus orbis terrarum* (1543). The single-point perspective was first used to convey an illusion of reality in the 1420s, when Brunelleschi reproduced on a panel the view of the baptistery of the cathedral of Florence from its main door. Brunelleschi's biographer, Antonio Manetti, recorded his impression of the artifice: "It seemed as if the real thing was seen: and I have had it in my hand and I can give testimony" (qtd. in White 116).

The Albertian perspective creates an empty space that may now be filled with "objects" whose size and appearance depend on our implied distance from them. As John White observes in *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space*, "space is created first, and then the solid objects of the pictured world are arranged within it in accordance with the rules which it dictates" (123). According to Martin Jay, Renaissance perspective "was in league with a scientific world-view that no longer hermeneutically read the world as a divine text but rather saw it as situated in a mathematically regular spatio-temporal order" (182). In his engaging book *The Day the Universe Changed*, James Burke points out the extraordinary significance of this development, which—in his view—signals the fall of the Scholastic-Aristotelian universe:

Aristotelian thought had endowed all objects with "essence," an indivisible, incomparable uniqueness. The position of

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these objects was, therefore, not to be compared with that of other objects, but only with God, who stood at the center of the universe. Now, at a stroke, the special relation between God and every separate object was removed, to be replaced by direct human control over objects existing in the same, measurable space. (77)

While Burke focuses on the “objectivization” of the world (i.e., the emergence of “a secular world of objects”), which goes hand in hand with the split of the Scholastic-Aristotelian substance, other scholars point in the direction of the subject. Thus, the historian of mentalities Philippe Braunstein and art theorist Erwin Panofsky underline the crucial role played by perspective in the appearance of a new sense of “self” widely understood today as “modern.” According to Panofsky, Renaissance perspective brings about “as much a consolidation and systematization of the external world, as an extension of the domain of the self” (67–68). Braunstein takes a step farther in this direction when he asserts that “self-consciousness is born when the individual can see himself in perspective” (536).

In his classic book *La picaresca y el punto de vista*, Francisco Rico focuses precisely on this connection between Lázaro’s self-consciousness and his “sense of perspective,” which is said to produce a secular and fundamentally “subjective” worldview:

En *La vida de Lazarillo*, como en *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, “la perspectiva es uno de los componentes de la realidad.” Con la mera forma de narrar, Lázaro nos pone continuamente sobre aviso: el mundo no es unívoco, no hay valores sino referidos a la persona, y aun a título provisional. El estilo lingüístico, desde luego, no desdice del planteamiento narrativo. Los objetos presentan tantas dimensiones diversas—e incluso contradictorias—como etapas recorre el sujeto. (45)¹

This relativistic conception stands in flagrant contradiction with the Scholastic view according to which the world is a reflection of the Kingdom of God and values are as immutable as social classes. The traditional worldview may be best illustrated by the Ebstorf variations of the well-known T-O maps

whose origins can be traced back to the cosmologies of Isidore of Seville. These allegorical representations, which date from the 1200s and 1300s, depicted the world as *the body of Christ*, with his head in the east, his feet in the west and his arms embracing the world from north to south. In this theologically ordered world, “the operative power follows the ruling of the intellective power” (Thomas Aquinas 196), and thus, as Rico notes, any attempt to change one’s status implies rebelling against natural law and Divine Providence: “pretender cambiar de estamento, ascender en la escala jerárquica, supone rebelarse contra la ley natural y la providencia divina, marchar—como repite don Juan Manuel—en línea recta a la condenación” (46).²

The notion according to which men are essentially defined by their position in the social body still finds resonance in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain in debates concerning the status of the poor among traditional circles. The nobiliary principle “I am who I am,” which is firmly rooted in the traditional system of theological beliefs, is frequently enunciated as “an obligation to act in a way that is proper to one’s position in society” (Maravall, *Teatro* 100). By contrast, *Lazarillo*’s perspectivism converts necessity into contingency while rendering reality problematic. As Rico says: “La primera persona [...] se presta a problematizar la realidad, a devolverle la incertidumbre con que el hombre la enfrenta, humanizándola” (42). After all, the illusion conveyed by the single-point perspective depends on the location of the viewer. Should the viewer shift his place, as Ernest Gilman says, “the world so carefully constructed for his benefit goes awry” (31).

In my view, Lázaro’s exposure of social injustice is grounded in the split of the Scholastic-Aristotelian substance, and is tied to the humanist impulse to re-define poverty as a social illness that needs to be remedied through institutional intervention. A few years ago, Javier Herrero wrote an incisive essay in the tradition of those who, following the early works of Américo Castro, postulated a connection between *Lazarillo de Tormes* and humanist thought: “Renaissance Poverty and *Lazarillo*’s Family: The Birth of the Picaresque Genre.”³ Herrero documents *Lazarillo*’s relationship with the most

engaging trends of northern European and Spanish humanism (Erasmus, Thomas More, and especially Luis Vives), highlighting the role played by Vives's humanism in the heated debates that followed the promulgation of the Poor Law of August 24, 1540, which called for the expulsion of the poor from the urban centers. This Poor Law tolerated very few exceptions, namely, those who had been licensed to beg by their parish priests. Of interest to us is a direct reference to the repression and expulsion of the poor from the city of Toledo in *tratado* 3 of *Lazarillo*:

Y fue, como el año fuese estéril de pan, acordaron el Ayuntamiento que todos los pobres extranjeros se fuesen de la ciudad, con pregón que el que de allí adelante topasen fuese punido con azotes. Y así, ejecutando la ley, desde a cuatro días que el pregón se dio, vi llevar una procesión de pobres azotando por las Cuatro Calles, lo cual me puso tan gran espanto, que nunca osé desmandarme a demandar. (167)

The appearance of contingency in the cracks of the Scholastic universe allows for a type of rethinking of society that could lead to socioeconomic reforms, but it also marks the birth of a new conservatism, which—as we can see in the above passage—begins to see the poor as moral aberration, a cancer to be extirpated from the social body, not through socioeconomic reform, but by means of moral discipline and tougher punishment. These repressive tendencies place the responsibility for indigence on the shoulders of the poor, who are viewed as idle and dishonest social elements.

Herrero is correct in relating *Lazarillo* to Vives's denunciation of social injustice. Vives's *Del socorro de los pobres*—one of the most debated essays in the discussions surrounding the Poor Law of 1540—questions the theological bases for the legitimization of social and economic differences, and denounces the fundamental injustice of those institutional practices (legislative and religious) that are grounded in the Scholastic conception of the poor as a theological necessity. Similarly, *Lazarillo de Tormes* calls attention to the arbitrariness of a system of values that allows for the existence of poverty, and exposes the lack of solidarity in the social body: “la caridad se subió al cielo” (150).⁴

It is interesting to note that *Lazarillo de Tormes* begins with the subject *yo* and ends with the word *fortuna*. One could say that the narrative is the literal production of the sign of the relation between the two. The word *fortuna* appears several times in *Lazarillo*: “fortuna fue con ellos parcial” (96), “nuestra fortuna” (104), “mi ruin fortuna” (157), “su adversa fortuna” (178), “en mi prosperidad y en la cumbre de toda buena fortuna” (205). While Scholastic Providence had imposed order among things, this “picaresque fortune” allows contingency and chaos to run the world of *Lazarillo*. To be sure, Scholastic thought had dealt with the notion of fortune; but the conception that appears in Lázaro’s discourse differs substantially from earlier formulations. For Saint Augustine, what we call fortuitous was simply our own miscomprehension of the necessary chain of events.⁵ Lázaro, on the other hand, thinks of “fortune” as a blind and erratic force that arbitrarily rewards some while unfairly punishing others.

One could say that Lázaro re-elaborates the topic of the “wheel of fortune” as it relates to his protean drive of self-affirmation—i.e., self-making—in a secular urban world marked by anomie and a blurring of traditional social distinctions. Hence, the protagonist of *Lazarillo* takes good note of the warnings of his first master: “Verdad dice éste, que me cumple avivar el ojo y avisar, pues solo soy, y pensar como me sepa valer” (109–10). His reflections may be connected with Maravall’s comments on the “uncoupled” (“desvinculados”), the new urban elements who seek to achieve control of their own destiny in a secularized world (“naturaleza desdivinizada,” as Maravall calls it).⁶

Lázaro is well aware of the importance of the possession of riches in this journey of self-making. There are constant references to money in *Lazarillo* as a means to achieve, not only food, shelter, and other material goods, but also social recognition. The increase in the use of money during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries signals the presence of a new system of relations according to which exchange value replaces the traditional notion of intrinsic, essential worth. Money makes it possible to evaluate and calibrate objects in terms of the principle of exchange value. The circulation of money contributes to “objectify” the world and to dissolve traditional forms of

interpersonal relation.⁷ To put it plainly, in a secular world marked by contingency and increasingly governed by a monetary system of exchange, Lázaro offers “the discourse of his life” as an example of success through constant movement (“medro”). By means of his self-portrait, the narrator-protagonist of *Lazarillo de Tormes* invites the reader to identify with his drive to achieve power and recognition in a society that has relegated him to the status of social excrescence.

The Dialectic of Desire

Lazarillo de Tormes delineates a perspective space in which Lázaro’s “subjective” worldview emerges out of a dialectic of presence and absence.⁸ In the introduction to his edition of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Joseph Rikapito takes note of the fact that, in the text, objects are described, not by what they are, but by what they are not (“no describe las cosas por lo que son sino por lo que no son”; 72). Thus, the narrator refers to the house of the priest, his second master, as the house where “there was nothing to eat” (“y en toda la casa no había ninguna cosa de comer”; 132). Similarly, the house rented by the squire is presented through the eyes of Lázaro as lacking space: “Todo lo que yo había visto eran paredes, sin ver en ella silleta, ni tajo, ni banco, ni mesa, ni aun tal arcaz como el de marras” (153). Lázaro accounts for “what there is in the picture” by stating “what the picture lacks,” that is, by revealing the absence of the objects of his desire. In fact, one could say that Lázaro sees time in the same way that he sees space, as a constant reminder of missing meals.⁹

This explains why the narrator does not provide physical descriptions of the characters who appear in the text, with the notable exception of the squire, whose physical presence and attire are inextricably tied to his desire for recognition. In his function as narrator, Lázaro is not interested in the facial or bodily features of his masters, but rather in who they are, that is to say, in what they lack, and therefore, in what they desire. This procedure of negativization—“procedimiento de negativización” according to Rikapito—is the anamorphic effect by means of which Lázaro’s self-consciousness projects itself onto the narrative.

Cervantes noted this aspect of the autobiographical discourse characteristic of picaresque narratives. In chapter 22 of *Don Quixote*, the knight-errant runs into a group of prisoners who are on their way to the galleys. Don Quixote shows a special interest in the misfortunes of the heavily chained Ginés de Pasamonte. The notorious convict takes advantage of the situation to promote his autobiography. The dialogue between Don Quixote, the commissary, and the prisoner offers some startling revelations regarding the structure of the “writing I” of *Lazarillo de Tormes* and the picaresque narratives of the early 1600s:

—Dice verdad —dijo el comisario—: que él mesmo ha escrito su historia, que no hay más, y deja empeñado el libro en la cárcel, en doscientos reales.

—Y le pienso quitar —dijo Ginés—, si quedara en doscientos ducados.

—¿Tan bueno es? —dijo don Quijote.

—Es tan bueno —respondió Ginés—, que mal año para *Lazarillo de Tormes* y para todos cuantos de aquel género se han escrito o escribieren. Lo que le sé decir a voacé es que trata verdades, y que son verdades tan lindas y tan donosas, que no puede haber mentiras que se le igualen.

—Y ¿cómo se intitula el libro? —preguntó don Quijote.

—La vida de Ginés de Pasamonte —respondió el mismo.

—Y ¿está acabado? —preguntó don Quijote.

—¿Cómo puede estar acabado —respondió él—, si aún no está acabada mi vida? (124)

In these ironical references to *Lazarillo*, Cervantes calls attention to the illusionistic effect of the narrative, which obscures the distance between protagonist and narrator.¹⁰ Cervantes’s comments on the picaresque here and elsewhere—especially in the exemplary novel *El casamiento engañoso y el coloquio de los perros* and his play *Pedro de Urdemalas*—reveal the temporal discontinuity that is constitutive of the autobiographical structure of the genre: the gap between the present of action and the present of narration.¹¹

The dialogue between Don Quixote and Ginés concerning *The Life of Ginés de Pasamonte* shows that the consistency of the “writing I” of the picaresque is retroactively produced by the narrative frame that gives meaning to a series of otherwise meaningless events.¹² To the extent that “the life of Ginés de

Pasamonte” and “the life of Lazarillo de Tormes” are written answers to the question of the Other regarding their identity, both autobiographies may be said to consist of *literal* manifestations of the narrator’s desire for recognition.

In fact, Lázaro himself tells the reader that the driving force of the discourse of his life is his desire for recognition, “so they see [...]”: “y vean que vive un hombre con tantas fortunas, peligros y adversidades” (95).¹³ Lázaro is fully aware of the fundamental role played by desire at every step of the social ladder. Hence his observation that desire—specifically “desire for recognition” (“deseo de alabanza”)—makes brave soldiers, as well as convincing preachers, artists, and men of letters:

¿Quién piensa que el soldado, que es primero de la escala, tiene más aborrecido el vivir? No por cierto; mas el *deseo de alabanza* le hace ponerse al peligro; y así, en las artes y letras es lo mismo. Predica muy bien el presentado, y es hombre que desea mucho el provecho de las ánimas; mas preguntan a su merced si le pesa cuando dicen: “¡Oh, qué maravillosamente lo ha hecho vuestra reverencia!” Justó muy ruinmente el señor don Fulano, y dió el sayete de armas al truhán porque le loaba de haber llevado muy buenas lanzas: ¿qué hiciera si fuera verdad? Y todo va desta manera: que confesando yo no ser más santo que mis vecinos desta nonada, que en este grosero estilo escribo, no me pesará que hayan parte, y se huelguen con ello todos los que en ella algún gusto hallaren, y *vean que vive un hombre con tantas fortunas, peligros y adversidades*. Suplico a vuestra merced reciba el pobre servicio de mano de quien lo hiciese más rico si su poder y *deseo* se conformaran [my emphasis]. (Ed. Valbuena Prat 84)¹⁴

Lázaro’s self-portrait is a letter to the Other in which he responds to its accusatory interpellation—i.e., the interrogation of Vuestra Merced. Lázaro’s answer includes a full account of himself (“entera noticia de mi persona”; 96) so that the Other may know of him, of his deeds and his relentless drive to prosper against all odds. In chapter 3, one learns that the same desire for recognition and power had driven his master to the city of Toledo: “Y vine a esta ciudad pensando que hallaría un buen asiento [*wishing* to get a good position], mas no me ha sucedido como pensé” (174). As we can see in the following

passage, Lázaro *reads* the squire's account as a disclosure of his *being* ("persona"): "Desta manera lamentaba también su adversa fortuna mi amo, dándome relación de su persona valerosa" (178). One can therefore say that Lázaro identifies the subject's *being* with his desire for the Other's love and recognition.

Seeing from the Margins

Lázaro's refusal to recognize himself in the sum of his representations—how the Other sees and evaluates him—is ultimately the expression of his unwillingness to lay down his weapon, to lower his oblique gaze in a sacrificial act of acceptance of his designated place in the Father's world. Hence, the narrative voice of *Lazarillo* consistently reveals the point of the split between the representations of the *pícaro* in the Other's view—his objective existence—and the marginal or oblique position from which Lázaro sees them—his being-desire, his *persona*.¹⁵

In his recent essay "Defining the Picaresque: Authority and the Subject in *Guzmán de Alfarache*," Carroll Johnson recalls Fray Diego de Guadix's sixteenth-century definition of *pícaro*, which he translates as follows: "In Spain, a *pícaro* is a vile, low class man who goes around poorly dressed and looking like he has no honor" (166).¹⁶ Lázaro refuses to recognize himself in these images. He wants to be seen the way he sees himself through his oblique gaze, as a man who deserves the Other's love.¹⁷ This is why Lázaro's textual account of his *persona* begins with a detailed exposition of the circumstances surrounding his a priori exclusion from the field of honor, his infamous lineage and the poverty of his family, all of which forces his father, his mother, and his black stepfather to engage in illegal activities.

The basic story line may be summarized as follows: After providing an account of his genealogy, Lázaro describes the circumstances surrounding the death of his father, his mother's love affair with a black moor, the birth of his mulatto brother, the incarceration of his stepfather, and the dissolution of his family. From this point on the narrative focuses on his constant hunger and sufferings at the service of his masters, which

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include a blind man, a priest, a destitute squire, a Mercederian friar, and a seller of indulgences. Later, he finds employment as a water seller in Toledo, and finally ends up as a town crier. Lázaro prospers by means of an “oficio real”—a lowly patronage job—which he earns through “amigos y señores”—friends and patrons. In the end, he marries the concubine of the archpriest of the parish of San Salvador in Toledo. The archpriest will eventually grant Lázaro his favor and protection in exchange for the ongoing sexual services of his wife.

In time, Lázaro learns to survive in the Father’s world and to profit from his marginal position—his a priori exclusion from the field of honor. But one thing he would never do is identify with the postures of authority, for he knows too much. As Alexander Parker says, “the poor who can rise only by means of a dependence on their fellow-men, will do so by learning that respectability and prosperity are masks” (29). Ruth El Saffar arrives at a similar conclusion in her analysis of the “writing I” of *Lazarillo de Tormes*:

Having been in a position to recognize the deficits built into positions of power, he does not confuse, as others do, the postures of authority with “reality” or “truth” [...] Though he appears to cross the line that separates the world of the Mother from that of the Father, he does so under conditions that guarantee his refusal of identification with the role he adopts to survive in the Father’s world. (“The Prodigal” 27)

Although Lázaro masters the rhetorical and representational signs of the Father’s world, he always maintains an ironical distance from them. Thus, the narrative takes the reader a few steps away from the official view—the fixed locus from which the system of authority makes sense—in order to place him/her at the margin from which chaos, violence, and the dialectic of desire become visible.

It is significant that Lázaro’s cry for recognition is enunciated against the background of a critique of the privileged who enjoy the benefits of the status of nobility. The closing lines of the prologue document the presence of this subversive drive in Lázaro’s discourse of self-affirmation:

Y pues Vuestra Merced escribe se le escriba y relate el caso
muy por extenso, parecióme no tomalle por el medio sino

del principio porque se tenga entera noticia de mi persona, y también porque consideren los que heredaron nobles estos cuán poco se les debe, pues fortuna fue con ellos parcial, y cuánto más hicieron los que, siéndoles contraria con fuerza y maña remando salieron a buen puerto. (95–97)

In this passage, Lázaro invites the reader to see him as a subject worthy of recognition against the background of a faulty and lacking Other. The “case” (“el caso”) that calls Lázaro’s discourse into being must be—as Rico and others have pointed out—the scandal involving Lázaro, his wife, and the archpriest: “Y así quedamos los tres bien conformes. Hasta el día de hoy nunca nadie nos oyó sobre el caso” (203).

Lázaro has admittedly reached, at this point in the narrative, the height of his good fortune; he has freed himself from traditional bondage, he has money in his pocket, a new family, and the protection of the Church. Now he wants the recognition of that Other who has interrogated him (“Vuestra Merced”). After all, Lázaro achieved what he did by means of a determination to attach himself to the honorable groups (“los buenos”).¹⁸ In this sense, it may be useful to consider the following exchange between the archpriest and Lázaro:

—Lázaro de Tormes, quien ha de mirar a dichos de malas lenguas nunca medrará. Digo esto porque no me maravillaré alguno, viendo entrar en mi casa a tu mujer y salir della. Ella entra muy a tu honra y suya. Y esto te lo prometo. Por tanto, no mires a lo que pueden decir, sino a lo que te toca, digo a tu provecho.

—Señor —le dije—, yo determiné de arrimarme a los buenos. (202)

The speech of the archpriest produces a curious inversion of the traditional concept of “honor” by identifying it (“tu honra”) with “profit” (“tu provecho”). It is important to note that Lázaro’s prosperity is made possible by his lack of honor, which had determined his exclusion from the field of identities (“los buenos”). El Saffar highlights this aspect of the text when she asserts that Lázaro’s expulsion from the Father’s world—the symbolic field where the code of honor holds sway—in turn allows him to occupy a vantage point from which he launches his critique of the system of values and authority:

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Lázaro's act of obedience, his agreement to respond to Vuestra Merced's demand that he explain his relationship to the archpriest and his wife, finally gives him power by exposing his tormentor to the vastness of all he has denied. Lázaro's "I," an "I" forced on him by his threatened expulsion from the father's world, gives him a vantage point outside that father world that converts it from a structure that possesses him to one he is in a position to dismantle. ("The 'I'" 191)

Throughout the text, but especially in *tratado* 3, the notion of honor, "la negra que llaman honra" (159), is a target of Lázaro's oblique gaze.¹⁹ Lázaro's exposure of honor as a form of social hypocrisy may also be connected with his denunciation of the lack of Christian solidarity and the corruption of the Church: "No nos maravillemos de un clérigo, ni fraile, porque el uno hurta de los pobres y el otro de casa para sus devotas" (105). And later, "no digo más, sino que toda la lacería del mundo estaba encerrada en éste [Lázaro's second master]. No sé si de su cosecha era o lo había anejado con el hábito de clerecía" (132).²⁰ While some critics might say that in these passages the narrator is simply denouncing individual cases of corruption among lowly Church officials, I would argue that Lázaro's ironic reference to the cleric's habit points in the direction of an institutional critique. Thus, I would suggest that the target of Lázaro's poignant accusations is ultimately the institution of the Church, which is cleverly signified in the cleric's habit.

A number of scholars have linked Lázaro's attacks on Church officials to the humanist positions of Erasmus and Vives. In arguing that the discourse of *Lazarillo* has as one of its central aims the exposure of religious hypocrisy, Parker, for example, insists that the issue needs to be re-evaluated in the context of humanist reform (29).²¹ Be that as it may, the anticlericalism of the narrator plays a central role in his critique of the system of authority that protects the privileges of the nobility against the claims of marginal social groups.

It could be said that Lázaro is especially concerned with those structures of desire that are hidden behind the Law. As El Saffar puts it: "From the top of the social structure to the bottom occupied by the town-crier Lázaro, the truth about desire and the structures designed to silence it are the same. Lázaro,

with his life story, lays bare the rule of desire within the Law” (“The Prodigal” 29). More importantly, the reader’s desire and his or her biases are also caught in this anamorphic web. The remarkably succinct *tratado* 4 is a perfect example of how the narrator uses the technique of incompleteness, which as we have seen is characteristic of the anamorphic mode of representation, in order to expose our preconceptions, our fears, our secret desires... Through his deliberate and “outsspoken” silence, Lázaro invites the reader to make his or her own mark in the narrative:

Hube de buscar el cuarto, y éste fue un fraile de la Merced, que las mujercillas que digo me encaminaron, al cual ellas le llamaban pariente. Gran enemigo del coro y de comer en el convento, perdido por andar fuera, amicísimo de negocios seglares y visitar, tanto, que pienso que rompía él más zapatos que todo el convento. Este me dio los primeros zapatos que rompí en mi vida. Mas no me duraron ocho días. Ni yo pude con su trote durar más. Y por esto y por otras cosillas que no digo, salí dél. (183–84)

George Shipley has recently suggested the possibility that in this passage “readers might be engaged in transplanting sexual innuendoes from their minds into the text” (43). The language of this chapter is clearly evocative of erotic situations and illicit behavior. There are several allusions to the sexual escapades of the friar who is said to be devoted to “secular affairs and visitations.” There are also indications of a possible sexual initiation of Lazarillo that could be signified—as Shipley convincingly argues—by his “trotting” and “his wearing out his first shoes.” And finally, there is a self-imposed silence: “And for this reason and other things which I am not telling, I left him.”

What kind of dark secret is this that Lázaro refuses to disclose even after his shocking revelations concerning the circumstances of his sexual initiation and the friar’s affairs? Could this silence point in the direction of the “pecado nefando”? While in effect some critics, among them Alberto del Monte and Maurice Molho, have entertained the possibility of “something of a homosexual nature,” it is important to note that, with his silence, Lázaro is actually inviting the reader to supply the missing information and come up with the right unspeakable

secret to complete the narrative on his or her own. Hence, as Shipley observes, “we have—aside from Lázaro’s syntactical invitation—only our own lasciviously productive minds to blame and to search for just the right perversion” (52).

Of course we may also draw from previous knowledge about the text, or about the time and circumstances of its production and consumption, and so on. But whatever the case, I would suggest that Shipley is fundamentally correct, especially if we connect Lázaro’s riddle with the picture puzzles associated with anamorphosis. In fact, Shipley’s interpretation of this chapter of *Lazarillo* as a trap for the reader is entirely consistent with Lacan’s theorization of anamorphosis as a “trap for the gaze” that reveals “the subject of desire” (*The Four* 89).

To conclude, in this first chapter I have tried to show that Lázaro’s life story is an early enunciation of the individual’s cry for recognition in the modern post-Aristotelian world. I have also argued that the discourse of Lázaro reveals the lack in the Other from the marginal position inhabited by the *pícaro*. Finally, I have suggested that, with his life story, Lázaro manufactures an anamorphic web that could be said to entrap, not just the implied reader “Vuestra Merced,” but also contemporary readers who may see their own presuppositions, biases, and indeed desires reflected in the text. Thus, I see the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* as an anamorphic picture puzzle that unveils the *real* within the Law, and therefore, the arbitrariness and violence of the mechanisms of reproduction and transmission of authority.²²

Chapter Two

The Gaze of an-Other in *Guzmán de Alfarache*

A Watchtower View

In his introduction to the recent volume *The Picaresque: Tradition and Displacement* (1996), Giancarlo Maiorino theorizes the picaresque as a countergenre that is rooted in a “center-periphery dialogics.” According to Maiorino, the picaresque countered canonical standards while supporting itself in what it violated (xvii). In this precise sense, picaresque marginality would imply “neither exclusion nor alienation [...] Instead, it fostered dialogism” (xvii). In my re-examination of Mateo Alemán’s *Guzmán de Alfarache*, I connect this dialogism or center-periphery dialogics with the double image that, as we have seen, is characteristic of the anamorphic form. I would like to suggest that Alemán stages a confrontation between two different (and ultimately opposed) perspectives in his drive to expose the deceptions of the world and to warn individuals against a life of disorderly freedom. I am thinking of the marginal worldview of the *pícaro*, on the one hand, and the morally correct perspective of the watchtower of human life (“atalaya de la vida humana”), on the other.

While both these perspectives are convincingly presented in the text, the narrative voice clearly privileges the watchtower’s view, which produces the same effect as the additional perspective in Holbein’s *Ambassadors*. To be sure, while the protagonist sees only the surface of things and thus remains blind to the spiritual truth of the world right up to the moment of his conversion, the narrator provides a watchtower’s view that allows the reader to see beyond the deceptive nature of appearances. One could say that the “truth” that is revealed from this additional perspective is “the face of death” that, as in

Holbein's anamorphic portrait, makes its ghostly appearance against the background of fading worldly deceptions.

Thus, while it is true that *Guzmán de Alfarache* presents a dialogic structure, it is important to note that the focus of the narrative is not the experience of uncertainty per se or even the problematic or unsettling nature of the world. Rather, Guzmán's autobiographical account privileges the experience of "desengaño" that allows for a moralistic interpretation of the protagonist's life. This is why, as Rico says, the *pícaro's* conversion goes hand in hand with the consolidation of the dominant perspective of the narrative: "Es importante caer en la cuenta de que el proceso de la conversión del pícaro se identifica con la paulatina consolidación del punto de vista que preside la novela" (71). Hence, the superimposition of world-views and/or voices in *Guzmán de Alfarache* results in the creation of a vantage point from which the life of the *pícaro* is re-evaluated "objectively" from a morally correct perspective. The reader is thus called upon to complete the picture of Guzmán's life under the supervision of the watchtower's gaze. From this external (nonsubjective) viewpoint, the *pícaro* appears as an abject social element, a cancerous cell that threatens to corrupt the entire social body.

Both Castro and Maravall coincide in linking the *pícaro* to positions of social abjection even as they focus on different aspects of the official mechanisms of exclusion. While Castro highlights the ethnic and religious aspects in his explanation of the marginalization of the *pícaro*, Maravall links the *pícaro's* "desvinculación" to the socioeconomic implications of the modern redefinition of the poor. Thus, in *La picaresca desde la historia social*, Maravall documents the appearance of a new conservative discourse that redefines the poor—especially those who are not physically impaired—as deviant, idle, and criminal parasites. Regarding the so-called blood factor highlighted by Castro, Maravall maintains that in seventeenth-century Spain the system of exclusion is not grounded in two different mechanisms—nobility and ethnicity—but only one: "No hay más que un sistema de participar en la exclusividad de la clase distinguida: el de la nobleza [...] Lo que sucede es que se utilizó la 'limpieza' como una difícil barrera más a vencer para penetrar en el sistema de exclusión" (*Poder* 118–19).

In his book *Romans picaresques espagnols* (1968), Molho maintains that the honor code works as a mechanism of exclusion that goes well beyond the boundaries of “purity of blood.” In his view, the notion of honor made it possible to stigmatize the lower social strata on the basis of a perceived unclean social heritage. In effect, in Counter-Reformation Spain, dishonorable behavior and, therefore, deviancy and antagonism, were often seen as confirmation of “blood impurity.” From this standpoint the *pícaro* would seem to be subjected to socioeconomic as well as racial—or ethnic—discrimination. Thus, *Guzmán de Alfarache* reinvents the *pícaro* as an embodiment of the multi-dimensional antagonism associated with a lack of moral restraint and simultaneously with unclean or infamous social heritage. This is why there is a fundamental difference between the way Lázaro and Guzmán see themselves against the background of the practices, norms, and beliefs that define the official model of authority (“modelo de autoridad,” according to Maravall). While Lázaro, the maker of his own fortune (“hijo de sus obras”), refuses to identify with those values that legitimize the system of exclusion, Guzmán, a repentant *pícaro* who gazes at his past life from the position of the moralizer—i.e., “atalaya de la vida humana”—takes the dominant system of values as the norm from which to condemn the *pícaro*’s aim to free himself from traditional bondage.

The protagonist of the novel is first presented to the reader as a young thief of obscure social origins—there are clear references in the text to his Jewish heritage and the poverty and moral degeneration of his family. Soon, Guzmanillo travels to Italy, where he poses as a wounded beggar before entering the service of a cardinal. After profiting from a series of frauds, the *pícaro* returns to Spain (Madrid) where he runs into trouble with the law. He then decides to enroll in the university but soon falls in love and abandons a promising career in order to get married. In time, Guzmán finds dishonorable ways to profit from his wife’s beauty while encouraging her life of prostitution. When his wife abandons him, Guzmán commits a series of robberies only to end up in the galleys, where he eventually repents.

This final repentance takes the form of a self-sacrificial act through which Guzmán repudiates his “picaresque identity” in

the name of reason and morality. In the end, Guzmán sees the light, confesses his guilt, and accepts the Father's mandate to give up his search for freedom, pleasure, and material goods: the "apetito," "gusto," "deseo," "pecado," "delectación," "sensualidad," and "pasiones" that had filled the heart of the *pícaro* ("aquel corazón viejo de antes"). The sacrificial dimension of the protagonist's moral rehabilitation is underscored in the following passages of the text:

sólo procuré la delectación. Menos di lugar a el entendimiento que me aconsejase de lo que él bien sabía, ni le quise oír; cerré los ojos a todos, despedí a la razón [...]. (2: 392)

Ya con las desventuras iba comenzando a ver la luz de que gozan los que siguen a la virtud [...]. De donde vine a considerar y díjeme una noche a mí mismo: "¿Ves aquí, Guzmán, la cumbre del monte de las miserias, adonde te ha subido tu torpe sensualidad? [...] Vuelve y mira que, aunque sea verdad haberte traído aquí tus culpas, pon esas penas en lugar que te sean de fruto. [...]"

"Esos trabajos, eso que padeces y cuidado que tomas en servir a ese tu amo, ponlo a la cuenta de Dios [...]."

En este discurso y otros que nacieron dél, pasé gran rato de la noche, no con pocas lágrimas, con que me quedé dormido y, cuando recordé, halléme otro, no yo ni con aquel corazón viejo que antes. Di gracias al Señor y supliqué que me tuviese de su mano. Luego traté de confesarme a menudo, reformando mi vida, limpiando mi conciencia [...]. (2: 461–62)

Significantly, Guzmán describes the moment of his conversion as the metamorphosis of the *pícaro* into another: "I fell asleep and when I woke up I found myself other, not me." The transformation of the protagonist occurs as he resolves to obey the Father's command to fulfill his duties in the service of his masters. One can see in retrospect that this is the moment of birth of the narrative voice. From this point of view, the text appears, not as the discourse of the *pícaro*'s life, his persona, or desire—as in *Lazarillo*—but rather, as the discourse of the *pícaro*'s death, and his regeneration in the voice of a preacher ("atalaya de la vida humana").

As it stands in the prologue to the second part, "lo que con su vida en esta historia se pretende [...] sólo es descubrir como

atalaya toda suerte de vicios y hacer atriaca de venenos varios, un hombre perfeto [...]” (2: 21). This goal to uncover vices and to construct the perfect man dictates the type of narrative material that will be incorporated into the discourse of Guzmán’s life: “Mas, como el fin que llevo es fabricar un hombre perfeto, siempre que hallo piedras para el edificio, las voy amontonando” (2: 114). The aim of the preacher to expose and condemn the *pícaro*’s drive is ultimately the signifying frame that gives shape and meaning to the diverse narrative materials of *Guzmán de Alfarache*:

Para el enfermo se hizo la medicina, las honras para los buenos y la horca para los malos. Y aunque conozco ser el vicio tan poderoso por nacer de un deseo de libertad, sin reconocimiento de superior humano ni divino, ¿qué temo, si mis trabajos escritos y desventuras padecidas tendrán alguna fuerza para enfrenar las tuyas, produciendo el fruto que deseo? [...] el malo pierde la vida, recibe castigos, padece afrentas, dejando a los que lo ven ejemplo en ellas. (2: 40)

Not surprisingly Alemán’s contemporary, Luis de Valdés—the author of the “Elogio” to the second part—sees the novel as a morally edifying work that encourages the sinful reader to repudiate vices while showing everyone how to govern themselves: “merece [Alemán] de todos dignas alabanzas, pues lo conocemos por el primero que hasta hoy con estilo semejante ha sabido descomulgar los vicios [...] enseñando sus obras cómo sepamos gobernar las nuestras [...]” (2: 24). This explains the pervasive presence of a Messianic tone in *Guzmán*: “Yo aquí recibo los palos y tú los consejos en ellos. Mía es la hambre y para ti es la industria, como no la padezcas. Yo sufro las afrentas de que nacen tus honras” (2: 36–37). And later, “a ti sólo busco y por ti hago este viaje” (2: 44). In this sense, Alemán’s novel may be seen as the chronicle of a sacrifice, i.e., an attempt to erase the voice of the *pícaro* and to retell his life story from the perspective of “another.”

A number of critics have long spoken of the presence of two narrative voices in the picaresque genre—*Guzmán*, in particular. Parker related this issue to the temporal rift that marks the narrative structure. In his view, the “writing I” of *Guzmán de Alfarache* is made up of two competing voices, “the one

belonging to the time of narrating, the other belonging to the time of the action [...] two different time sequences [...] two different levels of experience” (36). Parker ties this dual structure of the “narrative I” of *Guzmán de Alfarache* to the format of religious discourse, more specifically to the popular genre of *vidas de santos*.

Herrero (“Nueva”) and Enrique Moreno Báez also associated the picaresque novel with Counter-Reformation discourse, the sermon in particular. Although some critics, among them J. A. Van Praag and del Monte, later argued against these interpretations on the basis of an alleged burlesque tone that in their view dominates the discourse of Guzmán, other Hispanists have insisted on *Guzmán*’s relationship with Counter-Reformation culture in discussing the moral (Rico) and socioeconomic (Maravall, *La picaresca*) dimensions of the picaresque. Rico distinguishes between two distinct phases in Guzmán’s life, a first period of action dominated by the presence of the young *pícaro* and a second period of narration, in which the repentant and penitent Alfarache recalls his past acts of villainy, interspersing them with moral reflections: “un primer tiempo de acción, con un versátil Guzmanillo de protagonista; y un segundo tiempo de narración, en el que el sesudo y penitente Alfarache levanta acta de sus pasadas trapacerías, entremetiéndolas de reflexiones morales” (65).

Some of the most significant coincidences that I find between *Guzmán de Alfarache*, especially the second part, and the kind of moralistic drive that is characteristic of the baroque sermon have to do with the narrator’s prescriptive conception of “reason” as a set of prohibitions. The “yoke of reason”—“jugo da razão,” as Manuel de Nóbrega, the founder of the mission of Brazil, once put it (257)—is seen as a code of conduct and simultaneously a state of consciousness to which one must submit in order to earn salvation. This is why reason is said to be at war with desire:

De manera que podría decirse del alma estar compuesta de dos contrarias partes: una racional y divina y la otra de natural corrupción. Y como la carne adonde se aposenta sea flaca, frágil y de tanta imperfección, habiéndolo dejado el pecado inficionado todo, vino a causar que casi sea natural

a nuestro ser la imperfección y desorden. Tanto y con tal extremo, que podríamos estimar por el mayor vencimiento el que hace un hombre a sus pasiones. Mucha es la fortaleza del que puede resistirlas y vencerlas, por la guerra infernal que se hacen siempre la razón y el apetito. Que, como él nos persuade con aquello que más conforma con la naturaleza nuestra, con lo que más apetecemos, y esto sea de tal calidad que nos pone gusto el tratarlo y deseo en el conseguirlo; y por el contrario, la razón es como el maestro, que, para bien corregirnos, anda siempre con el azote de la reprehensión en la mano, acusándonos lo mal que obramos. (2: 390)

As in sermons, sacramental plays, and especially *vidas de santos*, the narrative of Guzmán focuses on a conflictive experience of the self that is torn between his unruly appetites and the norms of reason. The narrator associates passions and desires with human nature while he links the commands of reason to the realm of the divine. The terms of this opposition evoke El Saffar's distinction between the *world of the Mother* and the *world of the Father* in her recent studies on *Lazarillo de Tormes* and Saint Teresa's *Vida*.¹ In fact, the narrator's reflections concerning the different seasons of human life appear to reinforce this connection: "como la vejez es fría y seca, la mocedad es muy su contraria, caliente y húmeda. La juventud tiene la fuerza y la senetud la prudencia" (2: 156). Rico focuses on the moment of resolution of this inner conflict between man's natural instincts and what he calls the motions of grace. In his view, the most decisive action of the narrative of Guzmán comes with the triumph of one half of his soul over the other (76).

In effect, man's victory over desire is—according to Guzmán—his greatest achievement and the ultimate proof of his maturity: "El mozo que tratare de querer ser viejo, deje mis pasos y trate de vencer pasiones. Dispóngase a el trabajo y a fuerza de su voluntad ríndala[s] en el suelo, venciendo viejos deseos" (2: 158). This is why we ought to let reason guide us through the circumstances of life, since "la razón es como el maestro, que, para bien corregirnos, anda siempre con el azote de la reprehensión en la mano, acusándonos lo mal que obramos" (2: 390). Thus, the teachings of Guzmán coincide

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with the lessons in humility and Christian resignation that are characteristic of Counter-Reformation culture. We can see this most clearly in the following passage, in which the narrator coaches his readers to view their own suffering and exploitation as presents from a loving Father:

¿Qué tuvo Dios, qué amó Dios, qué padeció Dios? Trabajos. Pues, cuando partiere dellos contigo, mucho te quiere, su regalado eres, fiesta te hace. Sábelas recibir aprovechándote della. No creas que deja de darte gustos y haciendas por ser escaso, corto ni avariento. Porque, si quieres ver lo que aqueso vale, pon los ojos en quien lo tiene, los moros, los infieles, los herejes. Mas a sus amigos y a sus escogidos, con pobreza, trabajos y persecuciones los banquetea. Si aquesto supiera conocer y su Divina Majestad se sirviera dello, de otra manera saliera yo aprovechado. (2: 463)

In associating the *pícaro*'s search for pleasure and material goods with the threatening otherness of moors, infidels, and heretics, the regenerated Guzmán encourages his readers to follow those virtues—humility, resignation, obedience, and so on—that will earn good Christians a place in heaven. Although there are places in the text in which the seeds of an incipient bourgeois discourse may become apparent—as Michel Cavillac (1983) and others have suggested—it is clear—at least in my view—that Guzmán's narrative is deeply marked by the sign of a moral traditionalism that reaches back to Scholastic doctrine. Hence, the narrator's defense of the deterministic principles of the established system of authority: "La Providencia divina [...] [h]izo poderosos y necesitados. A ricos dio los bienes temporales y los espirituales a los pobres" (2: 299).

In the context of this static conception of the world, Guzmán's admonition to follow one's true path toward salvation appears as a moral obligation to act in accordance with one's fixed position in society: "Váyase cada uno por su camino adelante y no lo tuerza por el ajeno" (2: 366). Not surprisingly, the narrator's comments on the nature of God's work echo Augustine's doctrine of historical necessity:²

Si se consideran las obras de Dios, muchas veces nos parecerán el caballo que se revuelca; empero, si volviésemos la

tabla hecha por el soberano Artífice, hallaríamos que aquello es lo que se pide y que la obra está con toda su perfección. Hácensenos, como poco ha decíamos, los trabajos ásperos; desconocémoslos, porque se nos entiende poco dellos. Mas, cuando el nos los envía enseñe la misericordia que tiene guardada en ellos y los viéremos al derecho, los tendremos por gustos. (2: 465)

In his digressions regarding the nature of human suffering (“trabajos”), the narrator resorts to a pictorial analogy that works on the assumption that there are two different ways of looking at God’s work: the wrong way and the right way. He argues that if we were to see things from the correct viewpoint (“al derecho”), our sufferings would invariably appear as “treats” (“gustos”). As in the pictorial tradition of the “vanitas”—we may recall the somber images of Valdés Leal, for example—Guzmán wishes to fix our gaze on the afterlife. While the superimposition of perspectives reminds us of the double image characteristic of the anamorphic form, the narrator’s solution of the perspective puzzle—i.e., his positing of a correct viewpoint—is consistent with the indoctrinating goals of Counter-Reformation aesthetics. The voice of the preacher in *Guzmán de Alfarache* seeks to guide individuals into accepting their role in society and the dictates of public authority. In this sense, the watchtower’s reflections may be said to evoke the teachings of Calderón de la Barca in his popular sacramental play *El gran teatro del mundo*.³

On the other hand, and despite the constant pressure of the watchtower, there are other passages, even in part 2, in which Guzmán appears to see the world from the *pícaro*’s perspective in his denunciation of social hypocrisy. In chapters 2 and 3 of this second part, for example, Guzmán tells the story of his incarceration in Bologna. Although he appears to blame himself (“Yo soy el malo y, pues me dieron pena, debí de tener culpa”; 2: 169–70), his account of the circumstances that resulted in his prosecution presents distinctively ironic overtones. The effect of the narrative is thus inverted, as we can see in the following lines: “De tener yo justicia nadie lo dudaba. Sabíanlo todos como cosa pública; mas era pobre ‘y es bien que peche,’ no era razón dármele” (2: 165). With his ironic remark, Guzmán targets the system of justice, which from the standpoint of the *pícaro* is clearly unfair to the poor.

Chapter Two

Chapter 7 features some important reflections that are directed against the system of authority. In the following quote, for example, we can see that Guzmán exposes the hypocrisy of his social superiors with a conviction and decisiveness that reminds us of the *pícaro*'s social criticism in *Lazarillo de Tormes*:

Un ladrón, ¿qué no hará por hurtar? Digo ladrón a los pobres pecadores como yo; que con los ladrones de bien, con los que arrastran gualdrapas de terciopelo, con los que revisten sus paredes con brocados y cubren el suelo con oro y seda turquí, con los que nos ahorcan a nosotros, no hablo, que somos inferiores dellos y como los peces, que los grandes comen a los pequeños. Viven sustentados en su reputación, acreditados con su poder y favorecidos con su adulación, cuyas fuerzas rompen las horcas y para quien el esparto no nació ni galeras fueron fabricadas, ecepto el mando en ellas, de quien podría ser que nos acordásemos algo en su lugar, si allá llegáremos, que sí llegaremos con el favor de Dios. (2: 237)

Guzmán's poignant comments on the immorality and corruption of his superiors may be said to undermine the basis of the hierarchical structure of society. In accusing his wealthy and honorable masters of crimes more harmful and insidious than his own, Guzmán would seem to question the validity of a system of authority that rests on the maintenance of strict social divisions.

Critics such as Van Praag, del Monte, and Parker have long ago connected the appearance of a critical view in *Guzmán* to certain changes in the narrative tone. According to Parker, these changes mark the transition from digression to narration in the midst of a fundamentally didactic discourse. Parker thinks of the "difference of tone" in the narrative voice as a stumbling block for contemporary critics:

Although our age has little sympathy with overt didacticism, the dualistic structure of *Guzmán de Alfarache* need not, *qua* structure, be the stumbling-block it once was [...] What is a stumbling-block, however, is the difference of tone between the digressions and the narrative. Sometimes the former inveigh loudly against vices which the latter describes with a certain degree of delectation. (33)

It is significant that Parker associates the *pícaro*'s view with a certain excessive enjoyment of the narrative voice, even as his clear-cut distinction between digression and narration may be questionable. Some examples of the emergence of this "delectation" may be found in chapter 4 of part 2, where the narrative produces a literal doubling of Guzmán in the figure of Sayavedra. As Guzmán and Sayavedra take turns in telling their respective life stories, the *pícaro* can see himself in the figure of his double, not as the accusatory watchtower sees him from the point of view of the dominant system of values, but rather, according to his own desires. Both Guzmán and his clone, Sayavedra, take the high moral ground against the hypocrisy of their masters and the injustice of the established system of authority as they disclose their picaresque life with a high dosage of self-indulgence.

Much like the *pícaro*'s account of his life in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Sayavedra's self-portrait springs from his desire for recognition: "now I cannot help exhibiting my life in public" ("ya no puedo, aunque quisiese, dejar de hacer alarde público de mi vida"; 2: 190). Sayavedra takes pleasure in representing himself for Guzmán as a sort of prince of thieves, "a very genteel *pícaro*" ("un muy gentil *pícaro*"; 2: 192) who truly shines in the practice of the most difficult abilities demanded by his profession:

Pudiera leerles a todos ellos cuatro cursos de latrocinio y dos de pasante. Porque me di tal maña en los estudios, cuando lo aprendí, que salí sacre.

Ninguno entendió como yo la cicatería. Fui muy gentil caleta, buzo, cuatrero, maleador y mareador, pala, poleo, escolta, estafa y zorro. (2: 192–93)

The appearance of the marginal perspective of the *pícaro* results, once again, in a powerful, however momentary, questioning of the social order. The doubling of Guzmán in the figure of Sayavedra produces a revitalization of the *pícaro*'s cry for recognition. This cry emerges—as in *Lazarillo de Tormes*—against the background of an exposure of the social hypocrisy and a denunciation of the corruption of the justice system:

Si no, pon los ojos en cuantos hoy viven, considéralos y hallarás que van buscando sus acrecentamientos y faltando

a sus obligaciones por aquí o por allí. Cada uno procura de valer más. El señor quiere adelantar sus estados, el caballero su mayorazgo, el mercader su trato, el oficial su oficio y no todas veces con la limpieza que fuere lícito. Que algunas acontece, por meterse hasta los codos en la ganancia, zabullirse hasta los ojos, no quiero yo decir en el infierno; dilo tú, que tienes mayor atrevimiento.

En resolución, todo el mundo es la Rochela en este caso: cada cual vive para sí, quien pillá, pillá, y sólo pagan los desdichados como tú. Si fueras ladrón de marca mayor, destos de a trecientos, de a cuatrocientos mil ducados, que pudieras comprar favor y justicia, pasaras como ellos; mas los desdichados que ni saben tratos ni toman rentas ni receptorias ni saben alzar a su mano con mucho, concertándose después con poco, pagado en tercios, tarde, mal y nunca, estos bellacos vayan a galeras, ahórquenlos, no por ladrones, que ya por eso no ahorcan, sino por malos oficiales de su oficio. (2: 188)

Under the Gaze of “an-Other”

These apparent contradictions of the text have led some contemporary critics, most notably Paul Julian Smith in his well-known *Writing in the Margin*, to dismiss traditional interpretations of Alemán's novel. From Smith's deconstructionist position, traditional or “pictorialist” readings have simply “suppressed the contradictions inherent in the picaresque” (79). In responding to many of the issues raised by Smith and his followers, Johnson has recently advanced a psychoanalytic reading of *Guzmán* that focuses on the question of “who has the power to control the production of discourse” (164). Johnson connects the watchtower perspective with the ‘gaze of the Other’ (in the Lacanian sense). This connection allows him to recontextualize the contradictions of the text within the identity conflict staged by the narrative: “*pícaro* or *atalaya*, narrator or sermonizer, entertainer or teacher, servant or master” (179). In his view, what is at stake in Alemán's novel is the very survival of the *pícaro*'s perspective in a narrative world saturated with the accusatory presence of the Other:

Guzmán as protagonist is silenced altogether, or severe constraints are placed on the kind of discourse he can produce,

by forces and persons external to himself: the *qué dirán*, the *niños*, the other servants, the cook, the captain, the ambassador. [...] In this context, the discourse generated, narrative or sermon, and consequently the identity so constituted, is thus the product of the authority of the Other over the writing I. (169–70)

While Johnson speaks of the threatening presence of forces external to Guzmán—the children, the servants, the cook, the captain, the ambassador, and so on—these forces are ultimately “a function of the way he perceives them and the qualities he attributes to them” (169). In other words, they are specific manifestations or embodiments of the prohibitive presence of the Other. The gaze of the Other is not necessarily a “seen gaze” but rather, as Lacan says in *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, “a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other” (84).

For our purposes here it should be noted that Guzmán’s autobiographical account focuses on two essential steps of the process of subjectivization: (1) The perception of an accusatory presence that sees him from all directions: “De manera, que ya no tenía parte segura ni pared donde arrimarme, de donde no saliese un eco que me confesase los pecados” (2: 115); and (2) the internalization of dominant social values and norms in the name of reason. The process of subjectivization will be completed with Guzmán’s final repentance and moral rehabilitation (2: 461–62).

The watchtower justifies the need for reason’s objective supervision of human behavior and consciousness on the grounds that reason liberates men from the pressures of desire—what Guzmán calls “the enslaved subjection to their passions”: “¡Qué sujeción tan avasallada es la que tienen los hombres a sus pasiones propias!” (2: 317). Thus, not unlike the teachings of Christian missionaries in the New World, the discourse of the repentant *pícaro* maintains that reason frees men from slavery.⁴ While the narrator’s insistence on Christian resignation may be connected to the teachings of preachers and missionaries, his defense of reason, which he views as a closed system of universal laws, is also commensurate with the goals of the modern state and its *guided culture*, namely, political centralization and cultural homogenization.

In his engaging study *Control of the Imaginary: Reason and Imagination in Modern Times* (1988), Luiz Costa Lima ties this early notion of reason with the state's increasing need for supervision and control of the human consciousness: "The cult of reason incarnating permanent, universal laws came in service to, and at the same time was the desideratum of political centralization" (31). Under the scrutiny of reason, which takes the form of a self-prohibitive conscience, Guzmán's account of his life turns into an act of introspection. As Rico convincingly argues: "En lo humano, el desgarró de Guzmán es fruto de una conciencia vigilante, de un volverse sobre sí mismo para pedirse cuentas: y el redactar la autobiografía, harmónicamente, resulta ser un acto de introspección" (79).

In our discussion of the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes*, we saw how the narrator-*pícaro* projected himself (his desire) in a "subjective" testimony that unveiled the constitutive lack in the Other—i.e., the mark of the contingency and violence of the social order. By contrast, the narrator-watchtower in *Guzmán de Alfarache* fixes on the *pícaro*'s guilt, and thus, retells his story from the point of view of the dominant social groups. Under the gaze that conditions the sign of the narrator's discourse, the *pícaro* becomes—as Žižek argues in the case of the Jew—a disfigured image of social antagonism, a cipher that unifies in a single narrative "the experiences of economic crisis, moral decadence, and loss of values" (*For They* 18). By means of these allegorical operations, the field of identities displaces guilt from its structural center to the margins. This is the logic behind the voice of the watchtower in Alemán's novel—and also behind the discourse of the narrator of Quevedo's *El Buscón*. Both these works reinvent the *pícaro* as an aberration caused by a combination of unclean social heritage and lack of moral standards. There are important differences between the two texts, however. While Alemán's moralistic work focuses on the rehabilitation of the *pícaro* through a combination of punishment and indoctrination, Quevedo's satirical treatment forecloses any possibility of reintegration of Pablos into the social body. As Edward Friedman says of the protagonist of Quevedo's "novel" in his recent article "Trials of Discourse: Narrative Space in Quevedo's *Buscón*" (1996), Pablos is "a marked man" (200) without a voice, and whose "linguistic

alienation is, of course, an analogue of his social alienation” (208).

In contrast to *Lazarillo* in which the “I” of the subject of desire constitutes the organizing principle of the narrator’s discourse, we can clearly sense in *Guzmán de Alfarache*—and even more so in *El Buscón*—the commanding presence of the Other as it evaluates the life experience of the *pícaro* from an external viewpoint (“otro, no yo”). Johnson recalls several passages that illustrate how the narrator of *Guzmán* identifies with the values that sustain the system of authority. The following is an enlightening example: “Guzmán concedes the possible truth of the allegation [of the homosexuality or bisexuality of his father] hastening to line up on the side of society’s official homophobia. ‘But if it’s true, as you say, that he used creams and lotions [...] I’ll concede everything you say about him and I’ll be his fiercest enemy’” (176).

As a matter of fact, Guzmán himself may have had to confront allegations of homosexuality: “me ponían de lodo con sus lenguas. Últimamente, por ativa o por pasiva, ya me decían el nombre de las Pascuas. Y aunque les decía que como bellacos mentían, reíanse y callaban, dando a la verdad su lugar” (2: 61). Homosexuality, lack of honor, moral deviancy, and excessive enjoyment were frequently associated, since the Middle Ages, with the vile social heritage of Jews and new Christians.⁵ Time and again, the narrative voice of Guzmán connects femininity and Jewishness with moral degeneration and abject desire. In the following passage, for example, femininity is associated with cowardice and vengefulness: “mas yo el estómago traía con bascas y revuelto como mujer preñada, con los antojos del deseo de mi venganza. [...] La venganza ya he dicho ser cobardía, la cual nace de ánimo flaco, mujeril, a quien solamente compete” (2: 250–52). In other passages women are accused of a natural predisposition to desire too much or in excess: “No saben tener medio en lo que tratan y menos en amar o aborrecer, ni lo tuvieron jamás en pedir y desear” (2: 303). And even more clearly, “Y si les preguntan a todas o a cualquiera dellas: ‘¿Qué veis, qué sentís, qué pensáis[?]’ Maldita otra respuesta tienen para todo, si sólo decir ser gusto” (2: 353).

The narrator’s negative comments on femininity are in tune with the efforts of Counter-Reformation culture to indoctrinate

and control women. Many critics have recently focused on this aspect of Counter-Reformation culture, among them Elizabeth Perry, Ruth El Saffar ("The 'I'"), Anne Cruz, and María Helena Sánchez Ortega. They coincide in pointing out that a potentially free or desiring woman is viewed as "a site of terror and a place inspiring efforts at education and control" (El Saffar, "The 'I'" 187); or, as Sánchez Ortega puts it, Counter-Reformation culture produces a "demonization of female sexual energy not directly and exclusively linked to maternity or the general submission of the mother/wife" (211). Hence, Guzmán's advice to women to give up their desire for freedom and to reject their sensuality and sexual inclinations: "No tome ni ponga la doncella o la viuda su blanco en la libertad, en el salir de sujeción de padres o tutores. No se deje llevar del vano amor. Déjese de su torpeza la que sigue a su sensualidad" (2: 356). At times deformed images of femininity and Jewishness appear side by side integrated into allegories of abjection:

Cuando esto me decía, estaba yo de lo pasado y con lo presente tan confuso, que se me pudiera decir lo que a cierta señora hijadalgo, notoria que, habiendo casado con un cristiano nuevo, [...] viéndose preñada y afligida como primeriza, hablando con otra señora, su amiga, le dijo: "En verdad que me hallo tal, que no sé lo que me diga. En mi vida me vide tan judía." Entonces la otra señora con quien hablaba le respondió: "No se maraville V. Md., que trae el judío metido en el cuerpo." (2: 305)

In his edition, Benito Brancaforte clarifies that Guzmán's joke works on the basis of a common identification of Jewish heritage with cowardice: "El chiste (que no es muy 'limpio') se basa en un juego de palabras con *judío*, miembro de la casta judía, y *judío*, metáfora corriente por 'cobarde, miedoso'" (2: 305). In some instances the words *judía* and *jodí[d]a* were maliciously used as synonyms in the literature of the period.⁶ On these grounds, one could say that Guzmán's joke involving a fearful woman who is pregnant with a Jewish baby works on three different levels by invoking abject images of the "other gender" (woman), the "other ethnicity" (the Jew), and simultaneously the "other enjoyment" (sexual excess).

More often than not Guzmán takes the side of his accusers

as he recognizes (or misrecognizes) himself in the mirror of the Other:

Quedé tan avergonzado, tan otro yo por entonces, tan diferente de lo que antes era, cual si supiera de casos de honra o si tuviera rastro della.

[...] Entonces vi mi fealdad. En aquel espejo me conocí.
(2: 117)

When Guzmán recognizes himself in this mirror, he not only sacrifices his picaresque gaze but its placeholder as well, that is, the eyes with which he sees.⁷ Thus, Guzmán surrenders his picaresque self-image only to identify with the gaze of an-Other (“otro, no yo”) who disdains and stigmatizes him. If through his oblique gaze the *pícaro* could identify his own lack and/or guilt with the lack in the Other, the repentant Guzmán, who sees from the perspective of the master, fixes the blame on himself: “A mí me parece que son todos los hombres como yo, flacos, fáciles, con pasiones naturales y aun estrañas. Que con mal sería, si todos los costales fuesen tales. Mas como soy malo, nada juzgo por bueno: tal es mi desventura y de semejantes” (2: 35).

While the *pícaro* realizes that from the top of the social structure to the bottom everyone is guilty of pursuing social recognition and material goods, the watchtower singles him out as “another Judas who has betrayed his master”:

¡Que tratase de hacerme religioso, teniendo espíritu escandaloso! ¡Desdichado de mí! Desdichado de aquél, si alguno por su desventura no propuso en su imaginación lo primero de todo el servicio y gloria del Señor, si trató de su interés, de sus acrecentamientos, de su comida, por los medios deste tan admirable sacrificio, si procuró ser sacerdote o religioso más de por sólo serlo y para dignamente usarlo, si cudició las letras para otro fin que ser luz y darla con ellas. ¡Traidor de mí, otro Judas, que trataba de la venta de mi maestro! (2: 364)

This passage shows, perhaps better than any other, that the *pícaro* is converted into a scapegoat through which the master seeks to purge himself of guilt. Once again, the critical potential of *Lazarillo de Tormes* gives way to a sermonizing voice

that becomes a firm advocate of Counter-Reformation ideology. This explains why in Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* and later in Quevedo's *El Buscón*, the *pícaro* is associated with idleness ("hijo del ocio"), delinquency ("ladrón"), and moral aberration ("passiones naturales y aún extrañas").⁸

Edmond Cros has published a letter written by Mateo Alemán to Pérez de Herrera—the author of *Amparo de pobres*—in which Alemán separates those lazy and delinquent elements whom he associates in *Guzmán de Alfarache* with the group of *pícaros*, from the handicapped and physically challenged, the "true poor." This distinction allows him to define the *pícaro* as a cancer in the social body that must be cauterized: "Estos daños (Máximo mío) quisiera yo atajar, este cáncer se había de cauterizar, para gloria del Señor, provecho de la república, y bien particular de todos ellos, que, perdiendo el vicio, ganarían las almas y repararían sus cuerpos estos mal empleados" (qtd. in Cros 436–44). As we see here, Alemán's condemnation of the transgressive activities of the *pícaro* conveys a call for tougher anticrime laws and, even more significantly, for the stigmatization of criminal elements:

No, no; que no es útil a la república ni buena policía hacer a los ladrones tanto regalo; antes por leves hurtos debieran dárseles graves penas.

Échenlos, échenlos en las galeras, métenlos en presidios o denles otros castigos, por más o menos tiempo, conforme a los delitos. Y cuando no fuesen de calidad que mereciesen ser agravados tanto, a lo menos debiéranslos perdigar, como en muchas partes acostumbran, que les hacen cierta señal de fuego en las espaldas, por donde a el segundo hurto son conocidos.

Llevan con esto hecha la causa, sábase quién son y su trato. Castigan la reincidencia más gravemente, y muchos con el temor dan la vuelta, quedando de la primera corregidos y escarmentados, con miedo de no ser después ahorcados. Ésta sí es justicia [...]. (2: 134)

As a deviant social element who strives to enjoy a better life through all means (more often than not illicit means) at his disposal, Guzmán clearly falls within the confines of the group of thieves to which the narrator refers in his speech. While Alfarache's rejection of his picaresque life of transgression is—

as Parker points out—"the sign of his turning away from delinquency by submission to discipline, order and justice" (44), his will remains caught up—as Johnson says—in the structure of desire. This might explain the occasional narrative excesses ("delectation," according to Parker) that we have connected with the momentary appearance of the *pícaro*'s ironic and self-indulgent perspective.

This idea is consistent with Guzmán's own digressions regarding the opposition between reason ("entendimiento") and will ("voluntad"): "Dicen de Circes, una ramera, que con sus malas artes volvía en bestia los hombres [...] quedábales vivo y sano su entendimiento de hombres, porque a él no les tocaba. Muy al revés lo hace agora estotra ramera, nuestra ciega voluntad, que, dejándonos las formas de hombres, quedamos con entendimiento de bestias" (2: 393). This notion might shed some light on the otherwise enigmatic observation of the narrator—or perhaps the author—in chapter 6 of the second part: "Esto propio le sucedió a este mi pobre libro, que habiéndolo intitulado *Atalaya de la vida humana*, dieron en llamarle *Pícaro* y no se conoce ya por otro nombre" (2: 104). If these words are any indication, it is ultimately up to the reader: *Pícaro* or *Atalaya*; the "wrong" marginal perspective of the rogue, or the "right" watchtower view of the preacher?

On the other hand, readers—certainly contemporary readers—may focus on the perspectivistic accent of Guzmán's discourse. In his discussion of the novel, Rico concludes that questions of "point of view" are central to the narrative at several levels: "Guzmán, actor y autor, piensa o contempla y se siente pensar o contemplar: a cualquier nivel, le interesa el punto de vista tanto o más que la propia vista" (85). With this in mind, Ernest Gilman's reflections regarding the potentially disquieting effect of the double perspective in Holbein's *Ambassadors* might also work in the case of Alemán's novel. After all, *Guzmán*'s "dialogism" reminds us of the fact that what we see depends on our point of view, even as the narrator privileges the experience of "desengaño" from a morally correct watchtower perspective. As I intend to argue in the following chapter, the critical possibilities of the "center-periphery dialogics" of the picaresque—to use Maiorino's notion—will unfold in a more decisive manner in López de Úbeda's *La pícaro Justina*.

Chapter Three

Look Who's Talking!

Justina and Cultural Authority

Two Viewpoints

The first edition of Francisco López de Úbeda's *El libro de entretenimiento de la pícara Justina* (1605) included an emblematic depiction of the picaresque life as a ship approaching the port of "Desengaño," where Death awaits, mirror in hand, the arrival of Lazarillo, Guzmán, and Justina. In her journey through the river of Oblivion ("río del Olvido"), Justina is also accompanied by Celestina, Baco, and two allegorical figures who represent Time ("el Tiempo") and Idleness ("Ociosidad"). The flag at the top of the ship reads "el gusto me lleva." This curious picture—which may be connected with the moralistic posture of the author—reminds us of the watchtower perspective in Mateo Alemán's novel. But this has nothing to do with Justina's autobiographical account. As an unlikely narrator who is remarkably aware of the power of the pen, Justina stands by her own subjective and indeed unauthorized view. In this sense, and despite its moralistic frame, the text could be said to advance—as Nina Cox Davis has recently suggested—the critical potential of feminine discourse.¹

La pícara Justina has re-emerged in the last two decades as an important work thanks to Marcel Bataillon's reinterpretation in *Pícaros y picaresca* (1969), and especially to the proliferation in recent years of new critical approaches to the Spanish Golden Age.² Bataillon's well-known reading is grounded on the idea that *Justina* is a book of "courtly jokes" ("burlas cortesanías") that feeds on the tradition of buffoons while borrowing its narrative frame from *Guzmán de Alfarache*. As a collection of comical episodes and satirical digressions,

this burlesque work would have to be understood in the context of the literary and political intrigues of the court of Philip III.³ Thus, according to Bataillon, the autobiographical account of the *pícaro* should be seen as López de Úbeda's cover or disguise that allows him to make fun of specific historical figures (such as Francisco de Quevedo) and events (the royal trip to León in 1602, for example) while ridiculing Spain's obsession with genealogy and "purity of blood" (*limpieza de sangre*).⁴

The fact that most recent readings of Úbeda's work have admittedly sprung from this classical interpretation has done nothing, however, to preclude scholarly debate. On the contrary, controversies surrounding the meaning of the text have multiplied in the last two decades. A most enlightening debate has recently emerged in the field of feminist studies. Within this tradition, *Justina* has been celebrated as a startling proto-feminist text (see Rodríguez), and also, paradoxically, despised as a misogynist masquerade (Cruz, "Sexual"). Also within this tradition, Davis has just published an illuminating essay "Breaking the Barriers: The Birth of López de Úbeda's *Pícaro Justina*" (1996), which accounts for these diverging views while attempting to discern the function of *Justina*'s voice as a literary artifice.

At stake in the debates on and around the in/consistency of *Justina*'s voice are some of the central concerns of today's cultural studies, including the key issue of feminine subjectivity that conveys many unanswered questions concerning the problematic status of women in male cultures, the subject's possibility of resistance to an authority that is always already in place, the meaning of the female body and its possible role as an agent of resistance and change. The recent essays by Cruz and Davis deal explicitly with these questions. Their diverging views illustrate the complexity of the problems at stake and also the degree of difficulty of many of the obstacles upon which the critic is bound to stumble in the textual world of *La pícaro Justina*.

Thus, in her article "Sexual Enclosure, Textual Escape: The *Pícaro* as Prostitute in the Spanish Female Picaresque Novel," Cruz maintains that there are fundamental differences between those picaresque narratives that deal with male protagonists and the textual tradition of the "female picaresque novel." According

to Cruz, while male picaresque novels raise questions concerning the pillars of the social order, their female counterparts are always carefully registered within the cultural history of the figure of the prostitute. The characterization of the *pícaro* as prostitute is said to provide “a means of understanding the social and historical attitudes toward women held by the male authors of the female picaresque” (140). Hence, Cruz focuses on Úbeda’s moralistic framing of the narrative in his “prólogo al lector” in arguing that the language of the female *pícaro* remains at the service of the author’s “male-dominated and male-oriented discourse” (141). As a “free woman” whose moral frailty threatens the social order, Justina would be a pawn in an antifeminist discourse that ultimately “attempts to justify the need for masculine control of the ‘weaker’ sex” (150).

While agreeing with Cruz that through the appropriation of the female voice López de Úbeda’s work reflects the subjugation of women to male authority in seventeenth-century Spain, Davis convincingly argues that the function of the *pícaro*’s voice as literary artifice may be “intended to parody and hence question the constitution of such identity and position within the power hierarchy” (157). It is important to note that these diverging interpretations are grounded in a different understanding of the function of the burlesque in *La pícaro Justina*. Contrary to Cruz, for whom Úbeda’s irony would simply confirm his “antifeminism” (151), Davis sees the narrative’s burlesque tone as a mechanism that exposes and parodies “male desire” as well as “male authority.”

Following the work of Claude Allaire and René Cotrait, Davis draws a conceptual map of the passage that deals with the birth of the *pícaro* and the subsequent dialogue between Justina and her detractor, Perlícaro. In her view, the speech of the *pícaro*-narrator clearly deconstructs the textual presence of the male reader—i.e., the figure of Perlícaro—by producing a burlesque excess of phallic signs. Justina’s words would therefore “dictate that readers attracted to the lure of language confront their own worst reflections as they attempt to assemble her image” (153). Davis also underlines the fact that the author launches his attack against the institutionally sanctioned discriminatory practices associated with the investigations of *limpieza de sangre* from the marginal position of a free woman.

Hence, she concludes that although there is no evidence that the male author of *La pícara Justina* was interested in improving the material conditions of oppressed women in the early seventeenth century, "Úbeda seems to have anticipated in his creation of Justina [...] the true metaphoric potential of a feminine discourse" (154).

One could of course try to determine whether to agree or disagree with either of these views, but the question of why these conflicting readings are possible would remain. The meaning of *La pícara Justina* is indeed a most difficult historiographic problem, for the difficulties connected to the picaresque "dialogism" are enhanced here by the author's carnivalesque game of disguises, his flamboyant cross-dressing, and his playful superimposition of perspectives. These baroque excesses may be said to accentuate the dialogic structure of the text to the point of narrative dismembering and burlesque self-deconstruction.

One can find a similar superimposition of narrators in some of the works of Cervantes, most notably in *Don Quixote* and his exemplary novel *El casamiento engañoso y el coloquio de los perros*. This stylistic feature has been said to enhance the self-reflective nature of baroque literature in general and of Cervantine discourse in particular (see, for example, Spadaccini and Talens). *La pícara Justina* makes a special case, however, since its narrative frame stages a conflict between a masculine authorial presence and a feminine voice, which compete for narrative space. Although it could be argued that Salas Barbadillo's *La hija de Celestina* partakes of the structural complexity of López de Úbeda's text, the brief appearance of Elena's voice in *La hija de Celestina* is little more than a rhetorical gesture that does not have a significant impact on the otherwise moralistic discourse of the author-narrator.⁵

Friedman has developed an interesting argument on the question of the narrative voice(s) of *La pícara Justina*. His reflections in *The Antiheroine's Voice* (1987) anticipate many of the concerns of both Cruz and Davis while advancing some of the conclusions of the former, as we can see in the following remark: "López de Úbeda makes a concerted effort to include what may be termed women's topics in *La pícara Justina*, but the series of observations bespeaks a male viewpoint" (92).

Hence, *La pícara Justina* comes across in Friedman's reading as a work marked by the "antifeminist" sentiments of its author: "The manipulation of the female voice to evoke antifeminist (or pre-feminist) responses signals the inversion of perspective characteristic of the picaresque variations" (92).

But perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Friedman's argument is his comment concerning the *pícara*'s "freedom of speech" in a textual world dominated by the accusatory presence of the author. Although Friedman notes that the author superimposes himself in the structure of the narrative by assuming the position of the moralist, he also insists that there are no apologetic overtones in Justina's account of her life story, and thus, that "it is the author, not she, who professes to make a moral point" (91–92). As a matter of fact, Friedman toys with the idea of a primal contract between the author and his picaresque creation, an implicit and mutually beneficial agreement that would have determined the limits of the author's jurisdiction over the narrator's autobiographical account:

The author superimposes himself on the structure of the narrative, poetically at the beginning of each section and morally at the end. In the poems, he strives for variety and a touch of humor. In the *aprovechamientos*, he appends instructive but commonplace adages to a blatantly antisocial text to remove *La pícara Justina* from the threat of inquisitorial stricture. The benefits are reciprocal in that the author enjoys moral superiority over his creation and the narrator enjoys a certain freedom of speech. (92)

This unspoken contract between author and narrator would allow Justina some vital breathing space and a measure of discursive self-realization. Friedman ends his reflections on Úbeda's text by arguing that "its intricate use of language, exhaustive range of materials, and ironic exposure of hypocrisy proclaim an authorial presence who combines invention with subversion" (94). Perhaps the potentially subversive dimension of this *Libro de entretenimiento* originates not *strictu sensu* from the author, but rather from his shield, from what Bataillon used to call Úbeda's double disguise: "doble disfraz, femenino y picaresco" (185).

The book begins with a dedicatory note that is followed by two prologues and a general introduction in three parts. In the

first prologue (“prólogo al lector”), the author praises his work for its novelty, but also for its educational value. There is a second prologue that includes a letter written by Justina to Guzmán de Alfarache. This letter offers a quick summary of the adventures of the *pícaro*. The next section is an introduction written “by the hand of Justina” in which the narrator reflects upon her role as writer, and the goals of her discourse. The rest of the work is divided into four books entitled “La pícaro montañesa,” “La pícaro romera,” “La pícaro pleitista,” and “La pícaro novia.” Each book is structured into several sections and subsections. Justina’s life story is interrupted at the beginning and at the end of every section with poems and brief lessons (“aprovechamientos”). While the protagonist challenges many social rules in her relentless pursuit of freedom and pleasure, the text alternately celebrates and condemns the *pícaro*’s deviant drive. Thus, Justina advocates independence of judgment and behavior. The author, on the other hand, warns the reader against her disorderly attitude.

The *pícaro* has just begun telling the story of her birth in book number 1 when the first-person voice of Perlícaro bursts into the text to ridicule her effort while alluding insultingly to her Jewish origins and her feminine gender. According to Perlícaro, Justina would make a good witch but a lousy writer. The *pícaro*-narrator does not, however, shy away from the fight. On the contrary, after calling her detractor’s authority into question, Justina continues her account of the circumstances of her birth and the non-too-impressive deeds of the members of her family, including several petty thefts and scarcely profitable deceptions. In this part, Justina proudly vindicates her matrilineal birthright to a privileged place among the *pícaros*.

Book number 2 is a collection of comical anecdotes and corrosive digressions. One of the most remarkable episodes of this section narrates Justina’s kidnapping and attempted rape at the hands of a gang of delinquent students. The protagonist manages to escape unharmed thanks to her charms and arts of deception. The book also features a rather poignant description of the holy festivities of the cathedral city of León from the burlesque and “ill-intentioned” gaze—as the author says in one of the *aprovechamientos*—of the *pícaro*. The often sacrilegious deceptions of Justina grow in complexity and wit as the book progresses.

Chapter Three

In book 3 the protagonist and her siblings fight over her parental estate. Having been wrongfully disinherited, Justina steals from her brothers and sisters and moves to Rioseco, where she will complete her picaresque education under the tutelage of an old Moorish witch. After the death of her mentor, Justina manages to acquire the woman's possessions by posing as her granddaughter and only heir. At the end of book 3, the *pícaro* returns to Mansilla where she will appeal and eventually reverse the sentence concerning her rights to the family estate.

Book 4 deals with Justina's search for a suitable groom and the circumstances of her wedding, which marks the beginning of her first marriage. Some of the most interesting passages of this final book feature Justina's ingenious description of some masculine types: the presumptuous, the hypocritical, the self-centered, and the ostentatious, among others. Money is what Justina says she likes in a man, although it is crucial that he be "dative" (generous), "genitive" (sexually capable), as well as "nominative" (he must carry a good family name). In the end, Justina marries Lozano, a gambler with a poor record as a provider.

The comical episodes, anecdotes and digressions of *La pícaro Justina* simultaneously celebrate and condemn the *pícaro*'s ability and determination to deceive men and to profit from their foolishness. The naive and largely unidimensional males who appear in Justina's narrative are no match for the complexity and ingenuousness displayed by many of the feminine characters—Justina's mother, the old Moorish witch and, of course, the protagonist. But this is precisely López de Úbeda's point, or is it?

En este libro hallará la doncella el conocimiento de su perdición, los peligros en que se pone una libre mujer que no se rinde al consejo de otros; aprenderán las casadas los inconvenientes de los malos ejemplos y mala crianza de sus hijas; los estudiantes, los soldados, los oficiales, los mesoneros, los ministros de justicia, y, finalmente, todos los hombres, de cualquier calidad y estado, aprenderán los enredos de que se han de librar, los peligros que han de huir, los pecados que les pueden saltar las almas [...] y aun todos los que leyeren este libro, sacarán dél antídoto para saber

huir de muchas ocasiones y de varios enredos que hoy día
la circe de nuestra carne tiene solapados debajo de sus
gustillos y entretenimientos. (44)

Is the author not admonishing females against a life of disorderly freedom, frivolity, and moral and social deviancy; is he not warning males against the malice of free women and against the danger they pose to the social order? This is indeed one of the dimensions of the text—perhaps the dominant one—but there may be something more. From a broad historicist perspective there is little doubt that the author of *La pícaro Justina* “reveals his own uncertain attitudes towards all women [...] he attempts to justify the need for masculine control” (Cruz, “Sexual” 150). From a semiotic perspective, however, the linguistic gymnastics of López de Úbeda, his carnivalesque disguises, along with the self-reflective and self-deconstructive impulse of the narrative, emerge as traces of a potentially critical side of *La pícaro Justina*. This dimension may just go beyond the commonplace focus on the text’s satirical allusions to questions of genealogy and racial purity.

There are many passages in the text intended to remind the reader of the “natural” function of women in an orderly society according to the established system of authority. The general argument is that females were put on this earth to procreate and to look after their families, while men were created to lead and guide. Such statements are not limited to the *aprovechamientos*, which stand for explicit authorial interventions, but they can also be found in some of Justina’s own digressions: “sepa que el hombre fue hecho para enseñar y gobernar, en lo cual las mujeres ni damos ni tomamos. La mujer fue hecha principalmente para ayudarle al hombre (no a este oficio, sino a otros de a ratos, conviene saber:) a la propagación del linaje humano y a cuidar de la familia” (97). This must be one of those passages that motivated Friedman’s observation that “there are signs to indicate that the author does not withdraw from the text between the opening verses and the closing admonition” (*The Antiheroine’s Voice* 87).

At other times, however, this type of “authorial” intervention appears to be filtered through Justina’s corrosive irony. Thus, in the following example Justina parodies and ultimately

defies the authoritative discourse of male dominance while praising a lifestyle that leads to independence (“libertad”) and pleasure (“gusto”).

aunque sea cosa tan natural como obligatoria que el hombre sea señor natural de su mujer, aunque la pese, eso no es natural, sino contra su humana naturaleza, porque es captividad, pena, maldición y castigo. Y como sea natural el aborrecimiento desta servidumbre forzosa y contraria a la naturaleza, no hay cosa que más huyamos ni que más nos pene que el estar atenidas contra nuestra voluntad a la de nuestros maridos, y generalmente a la obediencia de cualquier hombre. [...] Verdad es que yo aumenté al mayoralazgo lo que fue bueno de bienes libres, porque en toda mi vida otra hacienda hice ni otro thesoro athesoré, sino una mina de gusto y libertad. (156–57)⁶

How should the reader understand the narrator’s statement in the context of López de Úbeda’s work? Of course if we look at the text from the right point of view (“al derecho”), that is, if we follow the guidelines established by the author, we should understand that this passage is simply a dramatization of the bad example of a “free woman” who rejects the community’s Christian values in her despicable search for pleasure. In effect, the author’s *aprovechamientos* focus on the dangers that “free women” such as Justina pose to the social order insofar as they do not recognize any superior authority, nor show respect for anything sacred, including the Church: “las mujeres dadas a vano gusto no le tienen en mirar cosas honrosas y de autoridad” (336); “una mujer libre a la misma Iglesia santa pierde el respeto” (458).⁷ But the author may have been unsure of the reader’s disposition to see the text from the correct viewpoint. His final warning to the reader appears to point in this direction:

Todo lo que en este libro se contiene, [está] sujeto a la corrección de la Santa Iglesia romana y de la Santa Inquisición. Y advierto al lector que siempre que encontrare algún dicho en que parece que hay un mal ejemplo, repare que se pone para quemar en estatua aquello mismo, y en tal caso, se recorra al aprovechamiento que he puesto en el fin de cada número y a las advertencias que hice en el prólogo al

lector, que si así se hace, sacarse ha utilidad de ver esta estatua de libertad que aquí he pintado, y en ella, los vicios que hoy día corren por el mundo. Vale. (466)

This admonition seems intended to relieve the author from any kind of responsibility concerning Justina's exemplary lack of restraint. With the Inquisition in mind, López de Úbeda wants to put some distance between his own educational point of view and Justina's erratic ways.

In a male-dominated culture that typically silenced women, the most dangerous attribute of the *pícaro* might be her voice (even a fictional one). This may explain the author's reluctance to withdraw from the narrative, his need to frame every episode with his own admonishing remarks, along with his frequent editorial annotation on the margins, all of which result in a rather peculiar overlapping of voices and perspectives. There are, in fact, instances in which the voice of the female narrator and that of the male author are so intertwined that it is nearly impossible to separate them. Thus, the author superimposes himself on the introduction written "by the hand of Justina" in order to warn the reader yet one more time: "Si ello el libro está bueno, buen provecho les haga, y si malo, perdonen, que mal se pueden purgar bien los enfermos si yo me pongo ahora muy de espacio a purgar a la pícaro" (79). This is obviously the author apologizing for Justina's ills. And yet, we cannot find any kind of transition that would signal a changing of the guard prior to this moment. The author appears to simply forget that Justina is the one supposed to be speaking here: "Mas ¡ay!, que se me olvidaba que ero mujer y me llamo Justina" (79).

While this situation could be seen as paradigmatic of the subjugation of the female voice to male authority in Counter-Reformation Spain (see Cruz, "Sexual Enclosure"), it is important to note that the author shows no intention of "purging" Justina, since censoring the content of her account would defeat the purpose of the book. Thus, even though the author has no desire to vindicate Justina's viewpoint, the structure of his own moralistic discourse demands that he incorporate the perspective of a "free woman," if only to ridicule and dismiss it. Or again, in order to make his moral point about the frailty of free women and the danger they pose to society, the author

needs to create a character who speaks and behaves like a “true free woman.”

One can, therefore, speak of a duality of perspectives in *La pícara Justina*: a “proper” perspective which corresponds to the moralistic presence of the author, itself compromised with the established system of values and authority; and the “excessive,” unauthorized viewpoint of a “free woman” who defies that very system. Significantly, when commenting on her “vigil” in León—“mi mirada,” as she calls it (243)—Justina hastens to point out that what is most crucial to her account, and hence, to her self-realization as narrator, is not “what she sees,” but rather her perspective, i.e., “the way she sees it”: “Por mí digo que esto de ver cosas curiosas y con curiosidad es para mí manjar del alma, y, por tanto, les quiero contar, muy de espacio, no tanto lo que vi en León, cuanto el modo con que lo vi, porque he dado en que me lean el alma, que, en fin, me he metido a escritora, y con menos que esto no cumplo con mi oficio” (322).

Could it be that Justina is connecting her “way of seeing” with the technique widely known in the world of painting of the early 1600s as the curious perspective? The redundant use of the words *curious* and *curiosity* would seem to make a good case in favor of the argument. Anamorphic paintings were often referred to as “curiosas pinturas,” as in Castillo Solórzano’s *La Garduña de Sevilla* (1642) (see Gállego 54). In any case, Justina’s digressions regarding the constructive function of the writer’s gaze reveal the subject in the making (her being, “el alma”) in a manner that reminds us of the *pícaro*’s anamorphic discourse of presence and absence in *Lazarillo de Tormes*. As a self-reflective narrator, Justina understands that her subjectivity is a function of the narrative and, hence, a paradoxical result of her “way of seeing” (“el modo con que lo vi”).

The first subsection of the second chapter of book 2 includes some remarkable authorial reflections regarding Justina’s gaze, which is said to penetrate all things: “Hácese bobilla / La del penseque, / Y no mira cosa / Que no penetre” (239). In the closing lines of this subsection—and clearly referring to Justina’s burlesque description of the religious festivities of the city of León—the author manages to compare the penetrating gaze of the *pícara*-narrator with the spider’s drive to reach beyond the flower’s surface in search of the venom at its core: “personas

mal intencionadas son como arañas, que de la flor sacan veneno, y así, Justina, de las fiestas santas no se aprovecha sino para decir malicias impertinentes” (247). One could certainly connect these revealing comments of the author with my earlier argument regarding the critical potential of Lazarillo’s oblique gaze. With their picaresque eyes, both Lázaro and Justina penetrate the surface of “things of honor and authority”—as the author says, “cosas honrosas y de autoridad”—aiming at “the poisonous core of the flower,” perhaps looking to find “venom” behind the community’s spectacular rituals of self-celebration.

¡Agua va! Justina’s Gift to the Other

Justina’s reflections on her role as narrator in the introduction and in chapter 1 are among the most intriguing and certainly the most obscure passages of the text. The complete title of the introduction reads “Introducción general para todos los tomos y libros escrita de la mano de Justina intitulada la melindrosa escribana.” This initial section is divided into three parts entitled “Del melindre al pelo de la pluma,” “Del melindre a la mancha” and “Del melindre a la culebrilla.” Chapter 1 presents equally enigmatic headings: “De la escribana fisgada,” “Del fisgón medroso,” and “De la contrafisga colérica.” A recurrent term in these headings is the word *melindre*, which along with its derivative *melindrosa* and its synonym *medroso* indicates fear and hesitation. Other words allude to the tools and the act of writing: a pen, an ink blot, and a small snake that serves as a watermark on the writer’s paper.

There are also three derivatives of the word *fisga*, which could be said to function as a phallic marker of power (see Davis). In this sense, the title of the introduction stands in sharp contrast with the heading of chapter 1, as if to indicate an important change in the narrator’s stance. Thus, Justina’s attitude shifts from the fears and hesitations of a “melindrosa escribana” to the self-assurance and aggressive stance suggested by the image of the “escribana fisgada.” Furthermore, the contrast between the headings “La escribana fisgada” and “Del fisgón medroso” is clearly intended to dramatize Perlícaro’s defeat at the hands of a newly empowered Justina.⁸

Whatever its specific ascription in López de Úbeda's courtly game of allusions, the figure of Perlícaro fits the role of a literary critic who calls the narrator's authority into question: who is Justina; is she a legitimate writer; is her story relevant?⁹ It is important to note that Perlícaro aims to discredit the narrator by calling attention to her inferior gender (woman), lowly social heritage (new Christian), and dubious moral standards (deviant; in the text, "pelona"). Taking on a professional tone, and carefully establishing his authority, Perlícaro concludes that Justina's work does not follow the proper conventions:

—Digo yo, el licenciado Perlícaro, ortógrapho, músico, perspectivio, mathemático, arismético, geómetra, astrónomo, gramático, poeta, retórico, dialéctico, phísico, médico, flebótomo, notomista, metaphísico y theólogo, que declaro ser este primer capítulo y todo el libro el segundo pecado nefando, pues no tiene nombre, prólogo, ni título. (87)

In her reply, Justina draws a parodic portrayal of the critic, seeking to ridicule his authoritative posture: "un figón, que, andando ayer cuellidegollado, ha salido hoy con una escarola de lienzo tan apocada como engomada, más tieso y carrancudo que si hubiera desayunándose con seis tazones de asador" (84). It is significant that the narrator's take on the critic conveys a problematization of his linguistic authority. Justina refers to Perlícaro as borderline speech impaired ("algo gangoso como monja que canta con antojos"; 85). She also insinuates that as a critic he can be nothing more than "a renter or borrower of verbs" ("alquilador de verbos"; 90). Thus, the *pícaro* aims to undercut Perlícaro's authoritative posture by alienating him from the very source of authority: the signifier.

The following remarks of the author in his *aprovechamiento* appear to confirm the idea that the central theme of this section entitled "Del figón medroso" is the function of language:

Concedió a los hombres el Autor de naturaleza la política comunicación de palabras, y el uso dellas para ayudarse unos a otros en las miserias de esta trabajosa peregrinación, para pedirse socorro en los trabajos, para alentar el amor del prójimo y de Dios, último bien nuestro. Pero los hombres ignorantes y viciosos adulteran la lengua y las pala-

bras, usando dellas para comunicar entre sí mismos cosas frusleras y vanas, más propias para calladas que dignas de salir a luz. (94)

Clearly, what is at stake in the conflict between Justina and her male detractor is the justification of the narrator's endeavor. Not only does she have to deal with the prejudices of Perlícaro and the author, but also, and perhaps more importantly, with a long-standing tradition of silence. Pen, ink, paper, and I, the writer; what does it all mean?

It should be noted that Justina is well aware of the power of language. This explains her initial hesitation in the presence of the pen. Thus, Justina feels both vulnerable and ashamed as she is forced to strip off her clothes in an emblematic way: "queréis publicar mi pelona antes que yo la escriba. Según esto, ya me parece, señora pluma, que me mandáis destocar y poner in puribus. [...] Digo que sí. Concedo que soy pelona" (56–57). Justina feels compelled to disrobe ("destocar"), stand naked ("poner in puribus"), and confess before her pen. This situation signals a crucial connection between the realm of writing—signified by the pen—and the vigilant and accusatory function of authority. Not surprisingly then, Justina re/produces in her confession a rather negative image of herself: "Digo que sí, concedo que soy pelona docientas docenas de veces" (92). The word *pelona* is associated here with poverty, and also with dirty or immoral activities.

The *pícaro*'s story is about to begin when the narrator discovers a hair on her pen. Friedman points out some possible sexual connotation here: "she wonders if the hair has appeared to cover her blemishes or rather to show that hair will never cover her blemishes, an allusion to the loss of hair from venereal disease" (*The Antiheroine's Voice* 86). Justina then manages to stain her fingers and clothes as she removes the hair from the tip of her pen. The word *mancha* is used in the text to describe the ink stains on her body and clothes, but also to signify Justina's Jewish heritage and moral deviancy. This explains why the author and the narrator have a different take on the subject. Justina cites a poet who once said that no stain lasts forever—"no hay mancha que con algo no se quite" (71). The author begs to differ:

Chapter Three

Por soplar, manchó Justina
Sayas, tocas, dedos, palma,
Y por el mal que adivina,
Aunque no era tinta fina,
Le llegó la mancha al alma.

Que no hay más justo recelo
Que temer manchas de lengua,
Pues no hay jabón en el suelo
Que, si te manchan un pelo,
Te pueda sacar la mengua. (64)

Clearly the emblematic ink-stains are intended to call attention to Justina's spiritual blemish, i.e., "a decease of the soul." The pen is thus a mirror in which Justina must confront her worst reflections. With its emblematic ink-stains and its poignant accusations, the pen draws a portrait of Justina as the Other sees her, i.e., a self-image that she is forced to confront the moment she enters the "masculine" realm of writing.

Indeed, Justina holds her pen responsible for a long list of accusations against her: "mi pluma ha hablado que soy pobre, pícara, tundida de cejas y de vergüenza [...] me ha dado seis nombres de P, conviene a saber: pícara, pobre, poca vergüenza, pelona y pelada" (62). It is interesting that Justina charges her pen with having given her six *P* names even as she lists only five of them. Could she be enticing her readers to come up with the final *P* name, to properly complete her portrait by drawing from their own biases against "free women"? The incompleteness of the passage is certainly reminiscent of *tratado* 4 of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, which we interpreted as an anamorphic trap for the reader (see the discussion at the end of chapter 1). In any case, the mark of the letter *P* reminds us of the stigma associated with the dreaded scarlet letter.

While the letter *P* is the signifier of Justina's blemish and, therefore, the mark of her abjection from the social order, Justina makes no attempt to hide her stigma. On the contrary, she exhibits her "picaresque blemishes" ("manchas picarescas") as if they were battle wounds or hunting trophies. As she herself puts it: "las manchas de la vida picaresca, si es que se ha de contar y cantar en canto llano, son como las del pellejo de pía, onza, tigre, pórvido, taracea y jaspe" (55). Remarkably, Justina is not trying to deny her guilt. Rather, her strategy involves incriminating others in a way that is reminiscent of

Lázaro's exposure of social hypocrisy. Is she the only rotten fruit in the basket; is she the first among the sinners? "¿Seré yo la primera camuesa colorada por de fuera y podrida por de dentro? ¿Seré yo el primer sepulchro vivo?" (57).

Even more surprisingly, Justina turns against her pen, putting the blame back where it belongs: "qué he de esperar, sino que como la pluma tiene la P dentro de su casa y el alquiler pagado, me ponga algún otro nombre de P que me eche a puertas?" (62). The reader's active participation is, once again, required, for only "he" would be able to complete the picture by imagining the final or quintessential insult (assuming a masculine reader in line with the ideological horizon signified by the accusatory presence of the pen). More importantly, at least for our purposes here, the narrator calls attention to the fact that the (p)en has a *P* of its own. Thus, with her wordplay, Justina succeeds in turning the signifier against itself (and consequently against the author and against the "ideal masculine reader").

Justina may have been initially overwhelmed, even intimidated, by ink, pen, and paper: "Púsose a escribir Justina, y vio / Pintada una culebra en el papel. / Espantóse y llamó al ángel San Miguel, / Diciendo: ¡Ay, que es culebra y me mordió!" (73). But by the end of the introduction, the *pícaro*-writer ("escribana fisgada") is clearly ready to go: "ya tengo papel sin temor, dedo sin mancha y pluma sin pelos. Puesta estoy en figura para escribir" (80). It is remarkable that Justina chooses to begin her life story with the cry "¡Agua va!," which, as we know, was commonly intended as a warning to watch out for dirty waters (and of course excrement). This expression may remind us of the episode in chapter 5 of the second part when Justina sends the "bachiller" to retrieve a basket of honeycomb from under her bed. Much to his surprise, the basket turns out to contain a pile of feces. This situation could be seen as emblematic in light of the final words of the introduction: "¡Agua va! Desvíense, que lo tengo todo a punto, y va de historia" (80). Lacan is reputed to have said that the signifier's present to the subject is nothing but "a gift of shit." With her life story, Justina is perhaps returning her gift basket.

At this point we may recall Schön's burlesque depiction of the biblical episode of Jonah coming out of the whale: *What do you see?* While the frontal perspective reproduces the "official"

version of the events, the view from the side turns the biblical theme into an obscene picture of a man defecating. Similarly, Úbeda's work stages a confrontation between the author's moralistic view and the burlesque, unauthorized perspective of the *pícaro*. With this in mind, one could say that Justina's narrative creates an oblique or anamorphic perspective from which to view matters of honor and authority ("cosas honrosas y de autoridad") as laughing matter. In this sense, *El libro de entretenimiento de la pícaro Justina* has much in common with *Don Quixote*, *Persiles*, and other Cervantine texts.

Finally, in closing part 1, I would like to reiterate the notion that interdisciplinary approaches may offer new contexts in which to re-examine the controversial problem of meaning in the picaresque. Our present reading context privileges instances of narrative self-awareness, which may explain why current contributions to the study of the picaresque—including my own—tend to focus on the structure of the writing I and its relationship with tradition. But we must also note that this type of narrative self-awareness is one of the most distinctively defining characteristics of the genre. As Howard Mancing has recently observed in his article "The Protean Picaresque" (1996), "no picaresque novel fails to evoke consciously the literary tradition with which it is associated" (284). For my part, in connecting the dialogic tendencies of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, *Guzmán de Alfarache*, and *La pícaro Justina* with the early developments of pictorial anamorphosis, I hope to have thrown some light on the ongoing discussions on and around the contradictions of the picaresque. After all, the first works of this rich literary tradition are indeed—as Durán says of *Don Quixote*—products of an age of uncertainty that was inaugurated by the "discovery" of perspectivism.

Part 2

Cervantes

*—Mirad, Sancho —dijo la duquesa—,
que por un ladito no se vee el todo de lo que se mira.
—Yo no sé esas miradas —replicó Sancho;
sólo sé que será bien que vuestra señoría entienda que,
pues volábamos por encantamento,
por encantamento podía yo ver toda la tierra
y todos los hombres por doquiera que los mirara.*

Cervantes
Don Quixote

Chapter Four

Don Quixote

A Case of Anamorphic Literature

What Do You See?

Américo Castro was one of the first critics to focus on *Don Quixote*'s perspectivism, which he attributed to Cervantes's understanding of reality as intrinsically problematic (see his 1925 *El pensamiento de Cervantes*). As he would later put it in the introduction to his edition of *Don Quixote* in 1960: "parece esto, pero puede ser quién sabe qué. [...] El observador y lo observado no coinciden, por lo común, en un vértice válido para otros observadores" (xxxv). For his part, Leo Spitzer (1955) would coin the well-known term "linguistic perspectivism" to describe Cervantes's narrative style. According to Spitzer, *Don Quixote* makes us aware of the fact that reality is always subject to diverse interpretations. A perfect illustration of this idea is of course the neologism "baciylmo" with which Sancho acknowledges his master's point of view while simultaneously asserting his own.

In the last few decades several scholars have arrived at a similar understanding of the novel as a fundamentally perspectivistic narrative: E. C. Riley notes the constant appearance of "multiple versions" of the same events; Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce ("Cervantes") argues that for Don Quixote "truth is but a point of view" (9); Anthony Cascardi ("History") sees in the novel a "double voice" that "ironizes the rhetoric of self-assertion characteristic of the modern age" (230); John Jay Allen ("*Don Quixote*") maintains that *Don Quixote* is "an exploration of the fertile possibilities in the management and manipulation of point of view" (130); Félix Martínez-Bonati calls it a "pluriregional" narrative; Michael Gerli (*Refiguring*) speaks of the novel's "multiple points of view"; and Nicholas Spadaccini

and Jenaro Talens favor terms such as “plurality of perspectives” or “games of perspectives.”

Some scholars such as Jean Cassou, Manuel Durán, and Ruth El Saffar (“Cervantes”) have made a point of connecting *Don Quixote*’s perspectivism with the developments of Renaissance perspective. According to El Saffar, “the perspectivism that Américo Castro and Leo Spitzer find as characteristic of *Don Quixote* is part of a Renaissance phenomenon which we traditionally see first manifested in the paintings of Giotto in the fourteenth century” (“Cervantes” 142). I intend to pursue this association in order to suggest a connection between Cervantes’s perspectivistic narrative style and the anamorphic mode of representation.

I would like to begin this discussion with yet another quote from Castro: “Cervantes llevó a cabo la máxima proeza de reducir a uno los dos planos del *Entierro del conde de Orgaz*; los armonizó secularmente de tal forma que la ensoñación ilusoria pareciera incluida en la realidad de este mundo” (*Cervantes* 107). In this passage, Castro calls attention to two different (and yet interconnected) aspects of Cervantes’s style: (1) His characteristic superimposition of planes; reality and dreams, but also—as I would like to suggest—high and low cultures, ideals and their grotesque and/or carnivalesque inversions, and (2) His representation of illusions and dreams (or nightmares as in the cave of Montesinos) as constitutive elements of reality. This notion may certainly be connected with the visionary work of El Greco, and also—perhaps even more clearly—with the superimposition of images characteristic of anamorphic compositions, whether it be the perspective experiments of Schön or Dalí’s “apparitions” in the twentieth century.

Things may look like windmills or ordinary inns, but they are also giants and castles in *Don Quixote*’s imagination. We know of course that *Don Quixote*’s judgment has been clouded by the fantasies created by the popular books of chivalry and are initially inclined to trust Sancho’s more “down to earth” views. Eventually, however, we come to realize that Sancho’s perceptions are not much more trustworthy than those of his mad master. The good servant is, for all we know, ready to concede the existence of Mambrino’s helmet as long as he gets to

keep the spoils of the battle with the barber: a harness (“jaez”) that looks suspiciously like a packsaddle (“albarda”). He is also eager to take possession of an island that is amazingly located miles away from the sea. Finally, we cannot but wonder about Sancho’s bizarre account of his fantastic voyage through the heavens in 2.41. If we cannot trust Sancho, and certainly not his master, who are we to trust? The narrator? Which one? James Parr has identified eleven different narrative voices (or presences) in the text, all of them unreliable in one way or another.¹

The point is, of course, that there is no single viewpoint from which the reader can have access to the truth of the events narrated in the text. Readers are thus invited to come up with their own conclusions on the basis of different and oftentimes contradictory versions of the same adventure. As Cide Hamete says in 2.24 about the episode of the cave of Montesinos: “y si esta aventura parece apócrifa, yo no tengo la culpa; y así, sin afirmarla por falsa o verdadera, la escribo. Tú, lector, pues eres prudente, juzga lo que te pareciere, que yo no debo ni puedo más” (208).² Meanwhile, Sancho expresses serious doubts about Don Quixote’s account of what happened in the cave, just as his master will later dispute Sancho’s story in the Clavileño episode. To complicate matters even more, characters (especially the two protagonists) are increasingly willing to negotiate their perceptions. Don Quixote’s admonition at the end of 2.41 is certainly indicative of the centrality of this process of negotiation: “—Sancho, pues vos queréis que se os crea lo que habéis visto en el cielo, yo quiero que vos me creáis a mí lo que vi en la cueva de Montesinos. Y no os digo más” (337).

As we see here, Don Quixote reduces the epistemological conundrum to a simple matter of will. Schön’s programmatic question “What do you see?” would thus be re-elaborated by the protagonist of Cervantes’s novel in a way that emphasizes the role of desire: “What do you want to see?” Hence, when his niece asks him to give up his chivalric world, Don Quixote responds with a simple statement: “my will wants it” (“mi voluntad lo desea”). Maravall called attention to this important aspect of the novel in *Utopía y contrautopía en el “Quijote”*:

En la plática sobre Dulcinea [...] descubre perfectamente Don Quijote el primado de la voluntad en su manera de ver

el mundo y nada menos que en relación a una pieza tan esencial como la señora de su inflamado y casto amor. “Píntola —dice a su escudero— en mi imaginación como la deseo” (II, 312). Es decir, primero es lo que se desea. [...] Y luego viene el pintar, o sea el representarnos las cosas. (163)

This observation is consistent with the unfolding of events in 1.21. Don Quixote decides by a mere act of will that he has found Mambrino’s golden helmet, even though he can only see from afar what the narrator describes as “un hombre a caballo, que traía en la cabeza una cosa que relumbraba” (258). Upon closer inspection, Don Quixote would later concede that the object looks indeed like a barber’s basin, as Sancho says, but he has already made up his mind: “Pero, sea lo que fuere; que para mí que la conozco no hace al caso su trasmutación” (260). In his determination to hang on to his perception of the object, the knight-errant embraces a perspectivistic and radically subjective conception of reality that is clearly reminiscent of the workings of anamorphosis: “y así, eso que a ti te parece bacía de barbero, me parece a mí yelmo de Mambrino, y a otro le parecerá otra cosa” (305).³ The key to Don Quixote’s knowledge of the “true nature of the object” is his desire. Significantly, he is not entirely sure about the harness that looks like a packsaddle, or even about the horse that looks like an ass. He leaves that up to Sancho.

In fact, Don Quixote’s identity is literally an expression of his will: “quiso [...] llamarse don Quijote de la Mancha” (102). This explains his well-known reply to his neighbor Pedro Alonso: “Yo sé quien soy [...] y sé que puedo ser no sólo los que he dicho, sino todos los doce Pares de Francia” (126). These passages show that Don Quixote’s identity rests solely on the basis of what he can be, and consequently, on the basis of what he desires. Thus, Alonso Quijano or Quejana or Quijada or Quesada wills a world in which—as Maravall suggests—Don Quixote may fulfill his destiny (166).

Clearly the protagonist of the novel represents an extreme case of self-delusion, but we should not forget that—as Lázaro de Tormes so vehemently pointed out—our desires as well as our fears shape our perception of the world in different but definitive ways. Gombrich focuses on this issue in his reflections on perceptual illusions: “Es la fuerza de la expectativa,

más que la del conocimiento conceptual, lo que moldea lo que vemos en la vida, no menos que en el arte. [...] En el momento en que una proyección, una lectura, queda anclada en la imaginación frente a nosotros es mucho más difícil eliminarla” (198–201). Gombrich recalls a well-known experiment that shows that familiar forms are literally colored by our expectations. The experiment concludes that observers will automatically see grayish tones when looking at the silhouette of a donkey while they tend to see green in a leaf cut out of the same material (199).

Gombrich also notes that once our projection has been anchored in an image (say, Mambrino’s helmet), it is not easy for us to discard such an impression. He illustrates the idea by referring to our experience of picture puzzles. Once the puzzle has been solved, it is nearly impossible to recover our previous impression of the picture.⁴ Of interest to us is Gombrich’s idea of what we need to do in order to free ourselves from projections created by our own expectations. We simply need to imagine an alternative, or, as he eloquently puts it, to “move to the alternative.” This is the only way—he says—in which we can experience ambiguity: “Para desvanecer la proyección, una vez hecha, tenemos que mudar a la alternativa. No hay otro modo de que veamos la ambigüedad” (209). Such is, as Gombrich suggests, the effect produced by anamorphosis, and also—I would add—by Cervantes’s irony.

In his book *La ambigüedad en el “Quijote,”* Durán maintains that Cervantes’s humor produces ambiguity by suspending our perception of reality: “vuelve ambiguo lo que toca: es un implícito juicio sobre la realidad y sus valores, una suerte de suspensión provisional, que los hace oscilar” (95). The same is true in anamorphosis. As Ernest Gilman says: “An anamorphic picture questions the fit between appearance and reality” (38). In fact, Durán’s definition of irony evokes the very mechanism of anamorphosis in rather descriptive terms: “La ironía es una oblicuidad; un cambio de dirección; la flecha que parecía apuntar hacia el cielo da la vuelta y cae a nuestros pies; la frase de sentido sublime encierra quizá un significado procaz” (59). While this notion would certainly appear closer to the humorous use of the secret perspective, it is worth noting that the defining characteristic of anamorphosis is precisely the

presence of an oblique perspective that unveils the incompleteness of the frontal view. In this sense, anamorphosis is always “parodical” insofar as it reveals the error of our first impression of the depicted image. Or as Ernest Gilman puts it: “[Anamorphic devices] use the rules of perspective, rigorously applied, to parody, almost to subvert, the purposes perspective is supposed to serve” (37–38).

The connection between irony and perspectivism is made explicit in Mikhail Bakhtin’s investigation into the origins of the novel. According to Bakhtin’s well-known theorization, novelistic irony is simply a result of the genre’s juxtaposition of languages (perspectives, in the Bakhtinian sense). He focuses especially on the superimposition of high and low worldviews: “The ‘absolute past’ of gods, demigods and heroes is here, in parodies and even more so in travesties, ‘contemporized’: it is brought low, represented on a plane equal with contemporary life, in an everyday environment, in the low language of contemporaneity” (21).⁵ Allen (“*Don Quixote*”) provides a perfect illustration of this kind of juxtaposition of high and low languages (or perspectives) in Cervantes’s novel. Both the passage from *Don Quixote* and Allen’s enlightening commentary are worth quoting:

“Apenas la blanca aurora había dado lugar a que el luciente Febo con el ardor de sus calientes rayos las líquidas perlas de sus cabellos de oro enjugase, cuando don Quijote, sacudiendo la pereza de sus miembros, se puso en pie y llamó a su escudero Sancho, que aun todavía roncaba” (1339a). [...] The dawn description from *Don Quixote* is not in itself ridiculous nor is it significantly different from others in *La Galatea*: it is the juxtaposition with Sancho’s snores which brings it down, the intrusion of the vulgar reality into the classical stylistic stratosphere. (136)

Allen’s argument could be illustrated with a host of other passages from the novel, including Sancho’s conversion of the miraculous balsam of Fierabrás into vomit, or his irreverent incontinence in 1.20, which produces a parodic inversion of Don Quixote’s heroic stance. Once again, Schön’s ironic (and literally oblique) treatment of Jonah’s legendary trials comes to mind. In all these instances, bodily functions work—as Luis

Murillo noted in the case of *Don Quixote*—as “a counterforce to the learned material of the epic” (58).

On the other hand, this inversion of the epic is but one of the multiple dimensions of Cervantes’s oblique treatment of high culture, from chivalry books to pastoral narratives and courtly love poetry. In his carnivalesque reenactment of high culture motifs and situations, Cervantes pays special attention to conventional representations of women. In 2.11, while reflecting on Sancho’s description of Dulcinea, Don Quixote becomes suddenly aware of certain inconsistencies in Sancho’s picture:

Mas, con todo esto, he caído, Sancho, en una cosa, y es que me pintaste mal su hermosura, porque, si mal no me acuerdo, dijiste que tenía los ojos de perlas, y los ojos que parecen de perlas antes son de besugo que de dama; y a lo que yo creo, los de Dulcinea deben ser de verdes esmeraldas, rasgados, con dos celestiales arcos que les sirven de cejas; y esas perlas quítalas de los ojos y pásalas a los dientes; que sin duda te trocaste, Sancho, tomando los ojos por los dientes. (102)

Sancho’s failure to “paint” a coherent portrait of Dulcinea has little or nothing to do with whether or not his description resembles the specific features of the woman in question. The problem is rather a “literary” one, a sort of misquotation, for—as Don Quixote is quick to point out—Sancho has got his metaphors mixed up. As we see in 1.13, his learned master would certainly make no mistake: “en ella se vienen a hacer verdaderos todos los imposibles y quiméricos atributos de belleza que los poetas dan a sus damas: que sus cabellos son oro, su frente campos elíseos, sus cejas arcos del cielo, sus ojos soles, sus mejillas rosas, sus labios corales, perlas sus dientes” (186).⁶

The full parodic effect of these passages may be best appreciated against the background of the ongoing discussion concerning Dulcinea’s magic transformation into a foul-smelling farmer (2.10): “Porque te hago saber, Sancho, que cuando llegué a subir a Dulcinea sobre su hacanea (según tu dices, que a mí me pareció borrica) me dio un olor de ajos crudos, que me encalabrinó y atosigó [...]” (99). The nature of Dulcinea’s odor is also discussed in 1.31: “—Pero no me negarás, Sancho, una cosa: cuando llegaste junto a ella, ¿no sentiste un olor sabeo,

una fragancia aromática [...]? —Lo que sé decir —dijo Sancho— es que sentí un olorcillo algo hombruno [...]” (379). The sudden irruption of the materiality of the body subverts the conventional portrayal of the lady as an “incorporeal non-entity,” to use the expression coined by Parr (163). Thus, just as the chivalric identity of Don Quixote de la Mancha is based on the negation of Alonso Quijano el Bueno, the consistency of the ideal represented by Dulcinea del Toboso depends entirely on the suppression of flesh-and-blood (and sweat) women such as Aldonza Lorenzo.

Cervantes’s re-elaboration of the traditional motif of the “lady in distress” responds to the same demystifying impulse. The episodes involving characters such as Dorotea, Altisidora, Doña Rodríguez, and especially the prostitute Maritornes produce distorted (anamorphic) reflections of the conventional motif. But the story of Marcela is perhaps the most effective inversion of Platonic and courtly love literature. In complying with the conventions of the pastoral genre, Marcela is regarded as a beautiful but cruel shepherdess whose ungrateful attitude precipitated the suicide of Grisóstomo, one of her many hopelessly desperate suitors. The episode features a public reading of Grisóstomo’s last poem, entitled “Canción desesperada.” The song may be seen as a parodic mirror image of the conventional love poetry exemplified by Garcilaso’s eclogues and sonnets (1.14):

El [rugir] del león, del lobo fiero
el temeroso aullido, el silbo horrendo
de escamosa serpiente, el espantable
baladro de algún monstruo, el agorero
graznar de la corneja, y el estruendo
del viento contrastado en mar instable;
del ya vencido toro el implacable
bramido, y de la viuda tortolilla
el sensible arrullar; el triste canto
del envidiado búho, con el llanto
de toda la infernal negra cuadrilla,
salgan con la doliente ánima fuera,
mezclados en un son, de tal manera,
que se confundan los sentidos todos,
pues la pena crüel que en mí se halla
para contalla pide nuevos modos. (192)

Grisóstomo's song is filled with recognizable elements from the Platonic and Petrarchan traditions, including the poet's direct interpellation of nature as a sympathetic companion that is called upon to share in the unspeakable suffering of the lyric I. Moreover, we can find an explicit reference to the poetry of Garcilaso de la Vega in the verse "salgan con la doliente ánima fuera," which is a variation of a verse from Garcilaso's second eclogue: "echa con la doliente ánima fuera" (see Allen's edition of *Don Quixote*). Yet, this is clearly not a case of mimetic reproduction. The very context in which Grisóstomo's song is deployed—an episode that undoubtedly pokes fun at the pastoral tradition—distorts the motif to such an extent that the poem itself would have to be perceived as a case of mock-mimicry. In fact, I would further suggest that the song's relentless juxtaposition of animal laments might even be Cervantes's way of comically underscoring the highly conventional nature of this type of poetry.

What happens next in 1.14 has often been discussed by critics, especially those with a feminist orientation.⁷ I am of course referring to the appearance of Marcela, whose untamed beauty and impeccably reasoned self-defense will indeed astonish her masculine audience. In essence, Marcela responds to the accusations that she is responsible for Grisóstomo's death by arguing that nobody should be forced to reciprocate love, since such an obligation would contradict the idea that true love is indivisible. She also expresses her determination to stay away from any form of subjection, especially marriage.

While *Don Quixote* seems initially convinced by Marcela's eloquent argument, her suitors show no intention of relinquishing their pursuit. Their collective deaf ear to Marcela's voice is dramatized by Ambrosio's final statement, which is intended for Grisóstomo's epitaph: "Murió a manos del rigor / de una esquivia hermosa ingrata, / con quien su imperio dilata / la tiranía de amor" (198). Thus, despite Marcela's brilliant intervention, her alleged guilt is literally set in stone (in Grisóstomo's gravestone). Furthermore, although *Don Quixote* has threatened to pick a fight with anyone who would dare to pursue the beautiful shepherdess, he and Sancho are actually the first men to chase her into the forest. It is as if Marcela's voice and/or wishes would be of interest to no one, a situation that

could be seen as exemplary of the tendencies of Neoplatonic literature.

That the entire episode is an ironical re-elaboration of some of the central motifs of pastoral narratives such as *Los siete libros de la Diana* by Jorge Montemayor has been generally noted by critics; yet, an important aspect of this parodic drive is often passed over in silence.⁸ I am thinking of the initial moments of chapter 15 of *Don Quixote*, which narrate Rocinante's love misfortunes in rather graphic detail:

Sucedió, pues, que a Rocinante le vino en deseo de refocilarse con las señoras facas, y saliendo, así como las olió, de su natural paso y costumbre, sin pedir licencia [a] su dueño, tomó un trocito algo picadillo y se fue a comunicar su necesidad con ellas. Mas ellas, que, a lo que pareció, debían de tener más gana de pacer que de ál, recibieronle con las herraduras y con los dientes. (202)

I would suggest that the mares' mistreatment of Rocinante is essentially a deformed mirror image of Marcela's rejection of Grisóstomo and the rest of her suitors. By suggesting a connection between Rocinante's love misfortunes and those of the cultured shepherds that fill the pages of Platonic and Petrarchan literature, Cervantes invites the reader to laugh at the atemporal ideals of high culture from the here and now of contemporary low genres.

In effect, Luis Murillo relates the prominence of Don Quixote's horse all throughout the novel to the festive spirit of folk humor that delights in celebrating bodily functions and in "picturing animals and men in close association" (62). While animals take center stage in several other passages of the novel, the devastating effectiveness of this burlesque strategy is best illustrated in 1.50 and 1.51. Here, as in the above-quoted episode, the conventions of pastoral and courtly love literature are again the intended target of Cervantes's irony. Thus, as Don Quixote and Sancho savor the food provided by the canon's servants, a beautiful goat comes out of the bushes: "vieron salir de entre aquellas malezas una hermosa cabra, toda la piel manchada de negro, blanco y pardo" (576). The goat has been chased by a shepherd, who grabbed her by the horns and pro-

ceeded to lecture her as if the animal were capable of understanding: “—¡Ah, cerrera, cerrera, Manchada, Manchada, y cómo andáis vos estos días de pie cojo! ¿Qué lobos os espantan, hija? ¿No me diréis qué es esto, hermosa? Mas ¡qué puede ser sino que sois hembra y no podéis estar sosegada; que mal haya vuestra condición y la de todas aquellas a quien imitáis!” (576).

The attribution of the goat’s erratic behavior to her feminine nature is indeed a humorous allusion to the traditional literary portrayal of women as fickle and ungrateful creatures. But the full parodic impact of the passage may only be grasped when the shepherd finally discloses the identity of those whom he regards as Manchada’s role models: the lady Leandra, and those like her—all women, for that matter. Thus, the shepherd narrates the circumstances surrounding his relentless courtship of the beautiful young Leandra, her infatuation with a soldier who would eventually rob and abandon her, and her subsequent imprisonment in a monastery. He also tells us that, since the time of her monastical enclosure, many of Leandra’s hopeless suitors have taken up herds of sheep and goats and are roaming the valley, which he regards as a “pastoral Arcadia.” At the end of his story, the shepherd establishes a close parallelism between Leandra and Manchada:

Yo sigo otro camino más fácil, y a mi parecer el más acertado, que es decir mal de la ligereza de las mujeres, de su inconsistencia, de su doble trato, de sus promesas muertas, de su fe rompida, y, finalmente, del poco discurso que tienen. [...] Y ésta fue la ocasión, señores, de las palabras y razones que dije a esta cabra cuando aquí llegué; que por ser hembra la tengo en poco, aunque es la mejor de todo mi apero. (582)

The association of Leandra with the “beautiful goat” is an inversion of the ideals of Platonic literature, especially the myth of woman as an elusive and dangerous creature who may only be manageable—as Parr eloquently puts it—“by metamorphosis into ethereal, incorporeal non-entities” (163). On the other hand, it is important to note that the superimposition of animal and human figures is—as Murillo argues—a fixture of folk

culture that thrived during the Renaissance and baroque periods in close connection, we might add, with the caricaturesque developments of anamorphosis.⁹

Thus, in its radical re-elaboration of all previous narrative materials, the new novelistic genre, and certainly *Don Quixote*, feeds (whether consciously or unconsciously) from popular culture, and simultaneously from other artistic manifestations of dissatisfaction with inherited modes of representation. It is in this experimental terrain of formal reactions against classical conventions that El Greco's "illusory dreams" might indeed meet—as Castro suggests—Don Quixote's distorted reality. But we should also keep in mind that Don Quixote's own dreams always end in terrible nightmares, as in the adventure-dream of the cave of Montesinos (2.23). Recall that when Don Quixote bumps into Dulcinea, she is not only bewitched—transformed precisely into a goatlike figure—but also in desperate need of money. Hence, one of her companions approaches Don Quixote with a puzzling request:

—Mi señora Dulcinea del Toboso besa a vuestra merced las manos, y suplica a vuestra merced se la haga de hacerla saber cómo está; y, que, por estar en una gran necesidad, asimismo suplica a vuestra merced cuan encarecidamente puede sea servido de prestarle sobre este faldellín que aquí traigo, de cotonía, nuevo, media docena de reales, o los que vuestra merced tuviere; que ella da su palabra de volvérselos con mucha brevedad. (205)

The appearance of Dulcinea as a goatlike figure ("saltando y brincando como cabras"), and especially the "materialization" of Don Quixote's relationship with his lady, are regarded by Don Quixote himself as the most painful visions he had to endure during the time that he remained in the cave of Montesinos. In effect, Don Quixote's nightmarish dream is an unconscious projection of his deepest fears; not giants and legendary monsters, but the materiality of the world in its most radical form: cold hard cash ("media docena de reales").¹⁰

Significantly, those very "things" that Alonso Quijano had to suppress in order to become Don Quixote de la Mancha reappear in the distorted images of the cave of Montesinos. The obsessive focus on the appearance, even the smell, of flesh,

along with the many allusions to the physical needs of the inhabitants of the cave—whether they be bewitched or dead—clearly reinforces this impression of “material excess.” Speaking of the bewitched inhabitants of the cave, Don Quixote says that they do not let out “excrementos mayores,” although it is generally accepted that their nails and hair keep on growing. He later describes his first encounter with Durandarte (2.23): “vi a un caballero tendido de largo a largo, no de bronce, ni de mármol, ni de jaspe hecho [...] sino de pura carne y de puros huesos” (199). He even notices the hair of his right hand: “algo peluda y nervosa” (199).

Shortly thereafter, Montesinos tells the story of Durandarte’s death, describing in nauseating detail how he carved his friend’s chest with a knife and pulled out his heart with his bare hands. He even throws in his estimation of the weight of the organ (“en verdad que debía de pesar dos libras”; 199) while recalling rubbing it with salt to tame its foul odor before presenting it to Belerma. The episode’s general attention to material detail is also illustrated by Montesinos’s clarification that he used a sharp knife and not a dagger as most people mistakenly believe and by the apparently gratuitous mention of Belerma’s menstruation (or lack thereof). Finally we saw that Dulcinea’s messenger interrupted her tragic plea for money in order to call attention to the quality of the “faldellín [...] de cotonía, nuevo” that she offers as collateral (205).

Thus, the emphasis on excessive (in your face and nose) materiality produces a parodic inversion of the highly spiritualized ideals of pastoral and chivalric romances, and Neoplatonic literature in general. In this sense, the cave of Montesinos may be seen not just as an allegory of the protagonist’s unconscious, but also as an anamorphic image of an entire form of culture that rests on “illusory dreams.”¹¹

What Are You Laughing At?

In his bizarre book *Genio de España: exaltaciones a una resurrección nacional y del mundo*, published in 1932 on the eve of the Spanish civil war, Giménez Caballero argues that Cervantes’s novel is, without a doubt, one of the most damaging works ever written. In the words of the fascist ideologue,

Don Quixote ought to be regarded as the spiritual equivalent of the collapse of the Spanish Empire: “El ‘Quijote’ es la corrección espiritual al desastre que se fraguaría en Münster. [...] Primera despedida de toda grandeza y aventura española” (40). And why? Because the novel contributes to the eradication of the mystical and blind pride of Imperial Spain: “a quitar ceguedad a la soberbia —mística y ciega— de la España yugada en haz” (39). According to Giménez Caballero, Cervantes was the creator of irony, which—he says—is his most powerful weapon against stupor: “el instrumento de combate frente al estupor” (40).

I believe that Giménez Caballero’s intuitive comments ought to be taken seriously, if only because they may help us realize just what it is that we laugh at when we read *Don Quixote*. Certainly we laugh at Don Quixote himself, at his ridiculous antics and his inability to see the world “the way it is”; at his simpleton servant, who has nothing better to do than to take orders from such an obvious fool; and also at chivalric and pastoral romances whose fantastic stories and empty rhetoric have driven good-natured Alonso mad. But this would hardly justify Giménez Caballero’s statement that the novel is the “spiritual equivalent of Münster.” At least the fascist ideologue is quite certain that Cervantes directs our laughter against the mystical blindness that sustains the Spanish Empire; and against all myths, for that matter.

In 1916, nearly two decades before the publishing of *Genio de España*, well-known Marxist intellectual Walter Benjamin made the following statement regarding Cervantes’s demystifying use of humor:

Only by becoming humour can language become critique. The magic of true critique appears precisely when all counterfeit comes into contact with the light and melts away. What remains is the authentic: it is ashes. We laugh at it. Whoever emits light in great profusion ends up by initiating these divine enterprises of unmasking that we call criticism. It is precisely these great critics who have had such an astonishing vision of the authentic: Cervantes.” (Qtd. in Eagleton 155)

Not surprisingly, Benjamin praises Cervantes’s humor for the very same reason that Giménez Caballero laments his inven-

tion of irony: because humor and irony are Cervantes's weapons against myth. The difference is that while the Marxist critic would like nothing better than to do away with myths—and thus reduce all counterfeits to ashes so that we may laugh at them—Giménez Caballero would much rather protect the mystical and blind pride of the Spanish conquerors from the devastating effect of Cervantes's irony, and certainly from our (contemporary) laughter.¹²

We can indeed find a link between the cultured myth of the knight-errant, which Don Quixote is determined to embody, and the ideals behind Spain's religious wars and its colonizing enterprise. In a sense, it's all about "saving the world" and "eradicating evil," whether in the form of monstrous giants or heretics. Thus, Don Quixote's spectacular failure—especially his utter inability to see things "how they truly are"—might remind readers of the futility of imperial and Counter-Reformation utopias. This is seemingly what Maravall has in mind when he connects sixteenth- and seventeenth-century utopias with the colonization of the New World and, more specifically, with the interests of the Crown and those of the Church (*Utopía* 26–27).

According to Maravall, *Don Quixote* ought to be understood as a "counterutopia," i.e., a utopia in reverse: "una utopía por el reverso" (256). He notes that pastoral and chivalric utopias are not two separate or independent sets of myths, but rather the two sides of the same ideal image of society: "mundo pastoril y mundo caballeresco, no son ni cosas separadas, ni siquiera yuxtapuestas, sino los dos hemisferios, perfectamente encajados, de una misma imagen ideal de la sociedad" (188–89). Cervantes's novel would thus function as an anamorphic mirror that constructs oblique images of society's ideals, especially those dependent upon chivalric and pastoral utopias. As Maravall says: "Cervantes construye en perfecta articulación las dos caras, caballeresca y pastoril, de la utopía, para darles la vuelta al reflejarlas en el espejo de la ironía" (172).

The fact that the windmills—which are supposed to be giants—and the herds of sheep—which ought to be armies—cannot be fully integrated into (or cannibalized by) Don Quixote's utopia may evoke, at least among contemporary readers, the virtual impossibility of reducing the world,

especially the New World and its inhabitants, to what “we want or need”—i.e., to their designated place in “our” symbolic universe. As Alonso de Ercilla’s *Araucana* dramatically shows, the praxis of conquest and colonization proves fundamentally incompatible with the chivalric and Christian ideals that aid in its justification simply because “things” ultimately refract the conqueror’s efforts to categorize them in ways that would be consistent with his worldview and the values that sustain it.

Ercilla’s tragic disillusion with the American wars of conquest results from his inability to see things as they were supposed to be seen from an imperial perspective. Instead, *La Araucana* transforms the Spanish crusaders into greedy villains, while the Amerindians become heroic martyrs who paradoxically embody many of those noble and Christian virtues the conquerors had been called upon to propagate and protect. The world would certainly be a better place for conquistadors, crusaders, and knights if windmills, sheep, and Amerindians actually acted like giants, armies, and barbarians. But this is not the case in *Don Quixote* and *La Araucana*. Perhaps this has something to do with why Ercilla’s work escaped the tragic fate of most of *Don Quixote*’s books in 1.6.

From this standpoint, one of the most significant developments of the novel takes place in 2.65 when Ricote explains the reasons behind the expulsion of the *moriscos*—“his own poisonous kind,” as he ironically puts it. Although Ricote focuses on the role of Don Bernardino de Velasco, the official appointed by Philip III to oversee the massive exile of the *moriscos*, his caustic speech concludes with a veiled attack against the king himself:

como él [Bernardino de Velasco] vee que todo el cuerpo de nuestra nación está contaminado y podrido, usa con él antes del cauterio que abrasa que del ungüento que molifica; y así, con prudencia, con sagacidad, con diligencia y con miedos que pone, ha llevado sobre sus fuertes hombros a debida ejecución el peso desta gran máquina, sin que nuestras industrias, estratagemas, solicitudes y fraudes hayan podido deslumbrar sus ojos de Argos, que contino tiene alerta, porque no se le quede ni encubra ninguno de los nuestros, que como raíz escondida, que con el tiempo venga después a brotar, y a echar frutos venenosos en España, ya limpia, ya

desembarazada de los temores en que nuestra muchedumbre la tenía. ¡Heroica resolución del gran Filipo Tercero, e inaudita prudencia en haberla encargado al tal don Bernardino de Velasco! (524–25)

Ricote has nothing but words of praise for the dedicated vigil of Don Bernardino de Velasco and the “heroic resolution” of Philip III. His is seemingly a straightforward justification of the controversial campaign of racial and religious cleansing. Allen takes this passage at face value in his *Don Quixote: Hero or Fool? Part II* when he says: “My reluctant conviction that Cervantes and I disagree on the issue [of the expulsion of the *moriscos*] is confirmed by my inability to identify any clues to irony in the context” (103). Yet, the mere fact that this official justification of the expulsion of the *moriscos* is offered by one of the victims—an exiled *morisco*—ought to make us think twice. The situation is as unlikely as the idea that a Jewish prisoner at Auschwitz might praise Hitler and Adolf Eichmann for their unrelenting zeal and dedication to the well-being of the German nation. Hence, it is safe to say that Ricote’s speech is an oblique reproduction of the official discourse of racial purity.

Some critics have argued that passages such as the above express the true racist sentiments of Cervantes.¹³ While it is true that many of his works reproduce racist remarks against not only *moriscos* but *conversos* and gypsies as well, this seems to be Cervantes’s way of ridiculing the notion of *limpieza*, and the myth of Christian superiority that comes with it. I cannot but see Sancho’s plea to the historians in part 2, chapter 8, as evidence of Cervantes’s ironic treatment of the issue:

Y cuando otra cosa no tuviese sino el creer, como siempre creo, firme y verdaderamente en Dios y en todo aquello que tiene y cree la santa Iglesia Católica Romana, y el ser enemigo mortal, como lo soy, de los judíos, debían los historiadores tener misericordia de mí y tratarme bien en sus escritos. (83)

The notion that “the historians” ought to embellish the story of Sancho’s adventures if only because he is a mortal enemy of the Jews is clearly ironic and cannot be taken any more

seriously than Humillos's claim that he is the more qualified candidate for the position of mayor of Daganzo simply because he descends from an illiterate—and thus non-*converso*—family (see Cervantes's *La elección de los alcaldes de Daganzo* 154–55). To attribute such statements to the alleged orthodoxy of Cervantes would be as ludicrous as deducing that the author of *Don Quixote* must have been an active advocate of slavery from the observation that Sancho plans to trade his black subjects in the Spanish market upon his crowning as king of Micomicón (1.29).

Once again Giménez Caballero's off-the-wall commentary in *Genio de España*, this time on the subject of Cervantes's orthodoxy, may prove rather useful. Speaking from the mystical height of his own fascist orthodoxy, Giménez Caballero cannot persuade himself that the "excessive orthodoxy" occasionally exhibited by the author of *Don Quixote* is in any way sincere. On the contrary, he sees Cervantes's notoriously ostentatious orthodoxy as a cover, as well as an ironic strategy: "Cervantes a veces alardea de excesiva ortodoxia y se le ve la ironía" (40). Francisco Márquez Villanueva has expressed a similar idea about Cervantes's various references to the expulsion of the *moriscos* in *Don Quixote* and *Persiles*:

El tributo elogioso [de la política de la expulsión] era obligado y constituía, además, el único salvoconducto para cierta actitud de "no es que yo esté en contra," que era la más atrevida que toleraba la discusión pública de aquel asunto. Si Cervantes fuera adverso a la política de exilio o abrigara reservas acerca de ella, sólo podía expresarlo en términos implícitos y, desde luego, tras pregonar su lealtad con ostentosa pompa verbal. Aquellas páginas sobre *moriscos* nos sitúan, pues, bajo el compromiso de encarnar esa especial categoría de lectores informados y reflexivos para quienes Cervantes las escribió. (234)

While I am fundamentally in agreement with Márquez Villanueva on this issue, my claim is that Cervantes's "excessive orthodoxy"—as Giménez Caballero eloquently puts it—is not just his cover but also his weapon against the myths that sustain imperial and Counter-Reformation utopias. Thus, here and elsewhere (*El retablo*, *Persiles*), Cervantes ridicules

Spain's obsession with genealogical concerns and racial purity (*limpieza de sangre*), and other officially promoted beliefs that contribute to the demonization of new Christians.

To be sure, with his anamorphic superimposition of perspectives, Cervantes invites his readers to laugh at the incoherence and ultimate impossibility of chivalric utopias in a secular world that constantly refracts them. But more importantly, when we follow Maravall's lead and, thus, establish a connection between Don Quixote's utopia and the redemptive ideals of the Spanish Empire, the novel's counterutopian drive appears to take on a subversive dimension. It is interesting that this connection is actually suggested by Don Quixote himself during his description of a group of sculpted figures in 2.58. The altarpiece includes representations of Saint George and Saint Martin, as well as an impressive rendering of the Spanish patron "Don San Diego Matamoros," whom Don Quixote regards as one of the bravest knights and saints ever to walk the earth and the heavens: "—Éste sí que es caballero, y de las escuadras de Cristo; éste se llama don San Diego Matamoros, uno de los más valientes santos y caballeros que tuvo el mundo y tiene agora el cielo" (459).

Don Quixote sees the altarpiece as a good omen because its figures allegedly represent his own profession: "—Por buen agüero he tenido, hermanos, haber visto lo que he visto, porque estos santos y caballeros profesaron lo que yo profeso, que es el ejercicio de las armas" (459). The difference—he says—is that they were saints who fought in a divine manner and I am but a sinner fighting in human ways: "sino que la diferencia que hay entre mí y ellos es que ellos fueron santos y pelearon a lo divino, y yo soy pecador y peleo a lo humano" (459). After listening very carefully to what his master has to say, Sancho asks Don Quixote a seemingly innocent, but nonetheless significant, question: "y querría que vuestra merced me dijese qué es la causa porque dicen los españoles cuando quieren dar alguna batalla [...]: '¡Santiago, y cierra España!' ¿Está por ventura España abierta, y de modo que es menester cerrarla, o qué ceremonia es ésta?" (460–61).

As the editor notes, in the context of the traditional call to battle, *cerrar* functions as an equivalent of *atacar* ("cerrar con el enemigo"). In his apparent simple-mindedness, however,

Sancho redirects our gaze to a more general sense of the word *cerrar*, meaning “to close,” or even “to heal” (“cerrar una herida”). His question “is Spain open in such a way that it needs to be closed?” may be read as “is Spain wounded so that it needs to be healed?” Whether or not this meaning is actually intended, Sancho’s question evokes the rhetoric of those religious zealots who believe that Spain is a wounded or infected nation that must be healed by fire, “el cauterio que abrasa,” as Ricote puts it.

Thus, in his response to Sancho, Don Quixote provides a clear indication as to where such a remedy might be best applied when he recalls in morbid detail the saintly deeds of the Spanish patron: “knocking down, crashing, destroying and killing Moors” (“derribando, atropellando, destruyendo y matando los agarenos [...]”; 461). The fact that Don San Diego Matamoros is right up there with Amadís de Gaula as one of Don Quixote’s inspiring role models ought to make us think twice about the ultimate meaning of the Golden Age Don Quixote plans to resurrect.

In any case, the knight’s “good omens” are placed in their proper Cervantine—oblique, or, as I like to call it, anamorphic—perspective when our hero, along with his servant and horse, is unceremoniously run over by a herd of livestock at the conclusion of the chapter. If Maravall and Giménez Caballero are indeed right, and we may actually presuppose some sort of connection between Don Quixote’s utopia and the mythical ideals propagated by the dominant sectors of Spanish society early in the seventeenth century, the events at the conclusion of 2.8 could be seen as a grotesque spectacle designed to ridicule “Spain’s mystical and blind pride,” to use Giménez Caballero’s expression.

Could we indeed be laughing at the myths and ideals that sustain Spain’s imperial and religious utopias as we witness how the hero of Cervantes’s novel is run down by sheep, trampled by cattle, knocked down by the blades of a windmill, strung to a windowsill, locked up in a pen, and generally beaten and degraded in all ways imaginable? After all, the madness of the knight-errant and that of the Spanish Empire—along with the madness of Franco’s Spain in the twentieth century—spring from the same historical blindness. Francisco Ayala has said it

best in his book *La imagen de España* (1986): “[La locura de Don Quijote] consiste en creer hallarse no en un tiempo histórico sino en un mundo pretérito, y en atenerse a unos valores ya abolidos” (206). If Don Quixote’s arms—lance, sword, armor—symbolize such a “preterit world” and its mythical values, the following quote from chapter 1 is perhaps most indicative of Cervantes’s attitude toward his character’s regressive utopia (1.1): “Y lo primero que hizo fue limpiar unas armas que habían sido de sus bisabuelos, que, tomadas de orín y llenas de moho, luengos siglos había que estaban puestas y olvidadas en un rincón” (101).

Chapter Five

***Persiles*, or The Cervantine Art of Looking Down and Awry**

Painting Weeds and Shrubs

The narrator of *Persiles* (3.2) notes, somewhat ironically, that the value of poetry depends solely on our estimation of it: “[La poesía] es habilidad que tanto vale cuanto se estima” (442).¹ Assuming that we may apply this statement to all forms of literature, it looks as though Cervantes hit the nail right on the head when he previewed *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* in his dedication of the second part of *Don Quixote* to the count of Lemos. Thus, Cervantes’s appraisal of his latest work reads: “[*Persiles*] ha de ser o el más malo o el mejor que en nuestra lengua se haya compuesto, quiero decir de los de entretenimiento” (*Don Quixote* 2: 28). Judging by the history of *Persiles*’s criticism, it is fair to say that Cervantes was right on both counts. While most Hispanists have traditionally regarded *Persiles* as the tasteless gibberish of a tragically senile Cervantes or as a failed imitation of Byzantine romances, some of today’s Golden Age scholars are beginning to re-examine the narrative under a new light (Ruth El Saffar, Diana de Armas Wilson, Julio Baena, and Amy Williamsen, among others). This new “poststructuralist” *Persiles* is emerging as the culmination of Cervantes’s lifework, or, at the very least, as one of his more complex, rich, and engaging literary endeavors.

In my understanding of the text, I draw primarily from these and other contemporary critics who are contesting the classic interpretations of Joaquín Casaldueiro and J. B. Avalu-Arce (and to a certain extent Alban Forcione), while dispelling commonplace notions associated with the historiographic myth of the “other Cervantes,” i.e., the eccentric creator of literary monstrosities. My thesis is that *Persiles* is a counterutopian

narrative in the sense that Maravall gives the term in his interpretation of *Don Quixote*, that is, an anamorphic mirror that inverts or, at the very least, distorts the symbols of Counter-Reformation culture.

Baena has done well in recognizing that the narrative style of *Persiles* fixes on “the absent element” of conventional aesthetics. But his effort to establish a close connection between Cervantes’s dissatisfaction with dominant representational codes and El Greco’s mysticism may have been misdirected. Baena writes: “De la misma manera que el Greco alargaba las figuras por insatisfacción con los paradigmas y cánones tanto de la naturaleza como de la estética en ella basada, ese *uno* sobrante del texto del *Persiles* [...] se coloca casi en primer plano de la escena, en un escorzo, un intento de alcanzar el elemento siempre ausente de una totalidad” (72). Both El Greco and Cervantes react against canonical forms of representation, but they look in opposite directions. While El Greco looks up at the heavens in search of “the absent element,” in the case of the novelist—as Durán says of Cervantine irony—“the arrow that seemed to aim at the heavens turns around and comes down at our feet” (“la flecha que parecía apuntar hacia el cielo da la vuelta y cae a nuestros pies”; 59). We may connect this idea with the narrator’s remarks on the nature of literary and pictorial representation in 3.14:

La historia, la poesía y la pintura simbolizan entre sí y se parecen tanto que, cuando escribes historia, pintas y, cuando pintas, compones. No siempre va en un mismo peso la historia, ni la pintura pinta cosas grandes y magníficas, ni la poesía conversa siempre por los cielos. Bajezas admite la historia; la pintura, hierbas y retamas en sus cuadros y, la poesía tal vez se realza contando cosas humildes. (578)

These reflections show a sharp awareness of the close relationship that history (and/or storytelling), poetry, and painting maintain with each other. The notion goes well beyond traditional clichés by underscoring the fact that literary and artistic forms of representation share in the creation and propagation of common symbols: “simbolizan entre sí.”² But what I find most interesting about this passage—at least from the standpoint of my own objectives in this chapter—is the idea that all

three crafts (“habilidades” as Cervantes calls them) might actually enhance their value by allowing “bajezas” (“vile things or deeds”), “hierbas y retamas” (“weeds and shrubs”), and “cosas humildes” (“low or humble things”).

This observation may help us understand Cervantes’s frequent jibes against poets (“the usual poets,” as he says elsewhere), and against dominant poetic trends. Thus, we read in 3.2: “la excelencia de la poesía es tan limpia como el agua clara, que a todo lo no limpio aprovecha; es como el sol, que pasa por todas las cosas inmundas sin que se le pegue nada” (442). While we might read this comment as a tribute to the superior “purity” of poetry, the previously quoted reflections on poetry, storytelling, and painting introduce a different perspective that modifies or bends our perception. Instead of a straightforward “sincere” allusion to the uncontaminated exquisiteness of idealistic poetry, we are now likely to see an oblique reference to its empty rhetoric. This impression might be farther reinforced when we recall Tomás Rodaja’s ironic appraisal of the potential wealth of poets in Cervantes’s exemplary novel *El licenciado Vidriera*:

Otra vez le preguntaron qué era la causa de que los poetas, por la mayor parte, eran pobres. Respondió que porque ellos querían, pues estaba en su mano ser ricos, si se sabían aprovechar de la ocasión que por momentos traían entre las manos, que eran las de sus damas, que todas eran riquísimas en extremo, pues tenían los cabellos de oro, la frente de plata bruñida, los ojos de verdes esmeraldas, los dientes de marfil, los labios de coral, y la garganta de cristal transparente, y lo que lloraban eran líquidas perlas; y más, que lo que sus plantas pisaban, por dura y estéril tierra que fuese, al momento producía jazmines y rosas. (60)³

This quote, which may be related to similar passages from *Don Quixote*, is both a critique of the rhetoric of Platonic and Petrarchan literature, and also, an attack against those poets who uncritically follow such trends. Thus, the narrator immediately intervenes to note that Rodaja’s jibes were directed solely against bad poets: “Esta y otras cosas decía de los malos poetas; que de los buenos siempre dijo bien” (60). Indeed we have enough indications to identify these “bad poets” with the legions of imitators of the Petrarchan tradition. But what about

the “good poets”? Who are they? I believe that the above quoted passages suggest that we ought to look among those who are willing to leave the heavens and pastoral Arcadias behind and return to earth, for—as the narrator of *Persiles* says—poetry, like the rest of the arts, may elevate itself by representing humble things: “la poesía tal vez se realza contando cosas humildes” (578).

If it is true, as many have suggested (Casalduero, Forcione, Avallé-Arce), that the narrative of *Persiles* may be regarded as a search for the definitive or final answer to the human condition, this answer is not to be found in the heavens, but right down here, among the weeds and shrubs of the earth, and in the materiality of our human existence. El Saffar (“An Alchemical”) points in this same direction when she maintains that the voyage of Periandro and Auristela inverts the proper Christian journey insofar as it “goes from earth to heaven to earth again” (32). Far from the kind of spiritual quest that we might expect from a Christian allegory of human life (Avallé-Arce), I see but material urges and no less material ends (“bajezas,” “hierbas y retamas,” “cosas humildes”) behind the labors of the protagonists and their companions.

To put it plainly, a straightforward or “frontal” reading of the story line of *Persiles* could initially result in an understanding of the protagonists’ journey as a Christian pilgrimage that starts off in some unidentified northern Barbaric Isle and comes to an end at the very center of the Catholic world (Counter-Reformationist Rome). However, the narrative fixation with violence and sex (perhaps some of the “bajezas” to which the narrator refers in 3.14), and its ironic distancing from the spiritual trials of Periandro, Auristela, and the rest of the main characters, emerge as traces of a powerful subtext that paints an anamorphic image of the key symbols and ideals of Counter-Reformation culture.

Significantly, the Christian view that portrays men as “restless souls who may only find solace in God” is countered by a secular notion that attributes the “movement of our soul” to sexual desires. We come across the “theologically correct” version at the very beginning of book 3: “están nuestras almas siempre en continuo movimiento y no pueden parar ni sosegar sino en su centro, que es Dios” (427). The second or oblique

variant is concocted by Auristela in the midst of his dialogue with Sinforosa (2.3). Auristela's version underscores the role of desire:

bien sé que nuestras almas están siempre en continuo movimiento, sin que puedan dejar de estar atentas a querer bien a algún sujeto a quien las estrellas las inclinan, que no se ha de decir que las fuerzan. Dime, señora, a quién quieres, a quién amas y a quién adoras: que como no des en el disparate de amar a un toro, ni en el que dió el que adoró el plátano, como sea hombre el que, según tu dices, adoras, no me causara espanto ni maravilla. Mujer soy como tú; mis deseos tengo y, hasta ahora, por honra del alma, no me han salido a la boca, que bien pudiera, como señales de la calentura. (289–90)

Auristela's steamy speech, which focuses on the physical symptoms of her own sexual urges ("calentura"), is indicative of the final destination of her journey. We know, of course, that she is on her way to Rome, which—according to Alban Forcione and Tilbert Stegmann—is the image of the place where the spiritual desire of the pilgrim ought to find complete satisfaction. Yet, Auristela's eloquent words point in the direction of a more material form of satisfaction. She even manages to evoke some shocking images of sexual perversion when she alludes to Pasifae's legendary fixation with the bull, and also to a popular story about a man (possibly Artajerjes) who fell in love with a banana.⁴ The mental picture of sexual excess called up by Auristela, along with her graphic depiction of her desire ("deseos," "calentura"), produces an anamorphic mirror image of the Christian motif evoked at the beginning of the passage: "nuestras almas están siempre en continuo movimiento."

This is consistent with Baena's observation that while Rome is the metaphysical north of the narrative, the etymology of the name Auristela (Auri-stella, golden star) suggests that she is in fact the guiding star (northern star) of Persiles's journey. As a matter of fact, the allegorical significance of Auristela's name is reinforced by Arnaldo's declaration of love in 1.15. Thus, he also refers to Auristela as his North or guiding star: "—¡Seas bien hallada, norte por donde se guían mis honestos pensamientos y estrella fija que me lleva al puerto donde han de tener

reposito mis buenos deseos!” (223). Baena explains the coexistence of these two guiding forces of the narrative (Rome and Auristela) by evoking El Saffar’s notion of “the fourth term”—the inaccessible Other that designates the place reserved for both God and Woman (see *Beyond Fiction*). This is why he writes: “cuando Periandro se refiere a Auristela como ‘mi norte’ establece la misma clase de busca metafísica: la del Otro inasible” (41).

I believe that the superimposition of God and Woman (Rome and Auristela)—both of whom are often referred to as guiding stars and final destinations of Periandro’s journey—is the anamorphic image that most effectively underscores the narrative’s deviation from (perversion of) Christian ideals by simultaneously hiding and revealing the true nature of Periandro’s desire. Thus, in 1.2 Periandro reflects on what he calls “the laws of human pleasure,” which he seems to find more powerful than those of religion, at least according to the narrator: “a él le parecía que tal vez las leyes del gusto humano tienen más fuerza que las de la religión” (130). This reflection may be seen as emblematic in light of the events that motivated Persiles and Sigismunda’s decision to embark on a religious pilgrimage. In effect, the true reason behind the supposed spiritual quest of the protagonists is—as we come to find out in 4.12—Persiles’s unbridled passion for Sigismunda, his brother’s fiancée.

Thus, the pilgrimage turns out to be nothing but an elaborate plot conceived by Queen Eustoquia and her younger son, Persiles (and agreed upon by Sigismunda). The scheme is designed to give Persiles an opportunity to win over the heart of Sigismunda while keeping his brother Magsimino in the dark: “concertaron que se ausentasen de la isla antes que su hermano viniese, a quien darían por disculpa, cuando no la hallase, que había hecho voto de venir a Roma, a enterarse en ella de la fe católica, que en aquellas partes setentrionales andaba algo de quiebra” (717). This vital piece of information, which surfaces just a few pages away from the work’s end, gives a new spin to the pilgrimage motif. The revelation that the journey of the protagonists is but an ingenious cover-up for a love affair suspends—we could even say, sabotages—Christian readings of the narrative. At this point our hermeneutic

edifice crumples to the ground as we are forced to look back and recompose the picture from a different angle. I see this passage as the key that allows—and indeed forces—us to reassess the meaning of *Persiles* from a secular standpoint. From this moment on, Cervantes's last work simply ceases to be a Christian romance.

If *Persiles* and *Sigismunda*—or *Periandro* and *Auristela*, as they are referred to during their pilgrimage—are finally united in Rome, their union is made possible, not by their alleged spiritual growth, but rather by the tragic fate of *Magsimino*. As Clark Colahan has pointed out, *Persiles*'s brother comes to die in Rome so that the protagonists may finally get married. The convenient death of *Magsimino* might leave readers wondering about the moral values upheld by a paradoxical happy ending that rewards the disloyal and egotistical actions (“bajezas”) of the protagonists, while punishing the innocent victim of their vile scheme. This is clearly a case of “all is fair in love and war,” that has little or nothing to do with Christian ideals or Counter-Reformation policy.⁵

From this perspective, *Policarpo*'s island emerges as an allegorical inversion of spiritual Rome. As the preaching *Clodio* (“el maldiciente”) says of its inhabitants: “sus moradores no danzan ni tienen otros pasatiempos sino lo que les ofrece Baco, en sus tazas risueño y en sus bebidas lascivo” (306). The narrator seems to make an explicit notation of the allegorical significance of *Policarpo*'s palace when he says in 2.4: “Estas revoluciones, trazas y máquinas amorosas andaban en el palacio de *Policarpo* y en los pechos de los confusos amantes. [...] Todos deseaban, pero a ninguno se le cumplían sus deseos: condición de la naturaleza humana” (296). As we can see, the narrative shifts focus from the particular to the general, i.e., from the amorous designs (“trazas y máquinas amorosas”) of the inhabitants of the palace to the narrator's philosophical reflections regarding “the condition of human nature.” It is interesting that the experience of desire, which is shared by everyone in *Policarpo*'s palace, is posited as an essential and defining attribute of human life.

Apart from the shockingly lustful stance of *Rosamunda* (or *Rosa Inmunda*, as *Clodio* calls her), which works as a parodic inversion of the exemplary chastity of feminine characters of

Byzantine romances, we might point out the reckless behavior of King Policarpo, who comes up with an elaborate scheme to set the island on fire so that he may marry Auristela. We know that Policarpo views marriage as a cover or veil (“el velo del matrimonio”) with which to hide his lustful desires (“lascivos deseos”). As Williamsen has noted, Policarpo’s decision to marry Auristela is framed by an ironic biblical reference: “Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried. [...] But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion” (1 Cor. 7.8–9).⁶ The biblical statement “it is better to marry than to burn with passion” is recontextualized as follows: “Quisiera [Policarpo] buenamente lograr sus deseos a pie llano, sin rodeos ni invenciones, cubriendo toda dificultad y todo parecer contrario con el velo del matrimonio [...] porque en cualquier tiempo es mejor casarse que abrasarse” (389). Thus, Paul’s admonition against the practice of sex outside holy matrimony in the First Letter to the Corinthians is turned into a statement in support of Policarpo’s projected desecration of marriage.⁷

As a matter of fact, we can find a similar juxtaposition of Christian and secular narrative materials in 1.8. The episode narrates the wrongful imprisonment of Rutilio and his supernatural liberation at the hands of an angel/witch/wolf (literally an anamorphic figure).⁸ Rutilio’s fantastic adventure concludes with the death of the lustful witch/wolf and its final conversion into the bleeding corpse of a woman. The moment of Rutilio’s liberation is clearly a re-elaboration of Peter’s miraculous escape from prison. This is how the Bible describes Peter’s liberation:

Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Quick, get up!” he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists. [...] Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. (Acts 12.7–10)

Rutilio's first-person account of his liberation reads as follows:

Túvela, no por hechizera, sino por ángel que enviaba el cielo para mi remedio; esperé la noche, y, en mitad de su silencio, llegó a mí y me dijo que asiese de la punta de una caña que me puso en la mano, diciéndome la siguiese. Turbéme algún tanto; pero como el interés era tan grande, moví los pies para seguirla, y hallélos sin grillos y sin cadenas, y las puertas de toda la prisión de par en par abiertas, y los prisioneros y guardas en profundísimo sueño sepultados [...] comenzó a abrazarme no muy honestamente; apartéla de mí con los brazos, y, como mejor pude, divisé que la que me abrazaba era una figura de lobo cuya visión me heló el alma. (177–79)

One obvious difference between the two narratives is that Peter's angel doesn't seem the least bit interested in having sex with Peter, while Rutilio has a hard time getting it through to the witch that "no means no." For readers who are familiar with the biblical source of the story, Rutilio's narrative is an obvious invitation to put two and two together, that is, to call up the wry image of Peter being sexually assaulted by the angel. Whether or not we consider these passages humorous in the same sense that we find humor in *Don Quixote*, they are indeed perfect examples of the double-voicedness of parody that Linda Hutcheon defines as "repetition with difference" (32).⁹ Taken together they produce what I have been referring to as an anamorphic distortion of Christian symbols and ideals. The sacred is in both instances distorted in a crooked mirror, brought down, dragged through the dirt, and turned into an oblique representation of "bajezas." This is once again the same kind of grotesque inversion that Schön created in his anamorphic portrayal of the biblical episode of Jonah coming out of the whale.

Thus, whether we focus on the unfolding of events directly related to the labors of the protagonists or the numerous peripheral stories, the actions of many of the characters are clearly motivated by lust (and not, as would be expected of a Christian allegory, by religious zeal). Another example of this recurrent pattern is the episode featuring Zenotia's pursuit of Antonio that results in the accidental death of Clodio "el

maldiciente” (2.8). The episode inverts the traditional gender roles, as Antonio plays the part typically reserved for the maiden:

Antonio, viendo lo cual, lleno de confusión, como si fuera la más retirada doncella del mundo, y como si enemigos combatieran el castillo de su honestidad, se puso a defenderle, y levantándose, fue a tomar su arco. [...] No le contentó mucho a la enamorada dama la postura amenazadora de muerte de Antonio y, por huir el golpe, desvió el cuerpo y pasó la flecha volando por junto a la garganta. [...] Pero no fue el golpe de la flecha en vano, que a este instante entraba por la puerta de la estancia el maldiciente Clodio, que le sirvió de blanco, y le pasó la boca y la lengua, y le dejó la vida en perpetuo silencio: castigo merecido a sus muchas culpas. (331–32)

It is interesting that Antonio’s violent reaction to Zenotia’s sexual advances results in the death of Clodio, which the narrator regards as a well-deserved punishment for his many sins. As we know, Clodio’s cardinal sin is his impertinent habit of offering unsolicited advice, especially in matters of love. His interventions are often reminders of the moral code and its prohibitions. As he tells Arnaldo shortly before Antonio’s arrow pierces his murmuring tongue and shuts his mouth forever: “entre la gente común tiene lugar de mostrarse poderoso el gusto, pero no le ha de tener entre la noble” (295). As a self-appointed moral vigilante, Clodio might have had better luck in *Guzmán de Alfarache*, but he finds no sympathy in the narrative world of *Persiles*. Not from Arnaldo, who refuses to listen to his admonitions: “no me aconsejes más, porque tus palabras se llevarán los vientos” (295). And certainly not from the narrator, who openly questions his motives: “Era Clodio, como se ha visto en lo que de su vida y costumbres queda escrito, hombre malicioso sobre discreto” (303). The narrator’s predisposition against Clodio’s murmuring kind may help explain the ironic distance with which the events of his death are presented to us. But we should also note that the gruesome—yet cold and unsympathetic—description of Clodio’s death is actually exemplary of Cervantes’s treatment of violence and suffering all throughout the text.

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Williamsen recalls a conference in which she suggested that Cervantes's portrayal of violence and death in *Persiles* might operate "in a manner similar to the black humor of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*" (47). She says that an unidentified reader who attended her talk challenged her interpretation by connecting the graphic violence of *Persiles* with Oliver Stone's shocking depiction of war in *The Killing Fields*. Williamsen quotes the passage at the center of the debate:

Entre estas flechas, entre estas heridas, entre estos golpes y entre estas muertes, estaban juntos la antigua Cloelia, la doncella intérprete, Periandro y Auristella [...]. Y así, pisando muertos y hollando armas, siguieron al joven bárbaro que les guiaba [...]. Desta manera cayendo y levantando, como decirse suele, llegaron a la marina. (Qtd. in Williamsen 46)

Williamsen uses this anecdote to illustrate that "the perception of any humorous distancing depends upon the initial conditions informing the reader's interaction with the written word" (47). This might explain the historiographic split between those who take *Persiles* "seriously" and, thus, read it as a straightforward imitation of the Byzantine romance, even as a literary symbol of the Counter-Reformation (Casalduero, Forcione, Avallè-Arce), and those who focus on the presence of humor and irony in arguing that *Persiles* mocks the conventions of Christian and Byzantine romances (Zimic, de Armas Wilson, Williamsen). There are also scholars who acknowledge the presence of humor in *Persiles* but do not see it as a central or even significant element of the narrative (Teresa Aveleyra Arroyo de Anda, Alberto Navarro González). For my part, I tend to side with Williamsen in light of passages such as the rescue scene from 2.2:

Grande fue la priesa que se dieron a serrar el bajel, y grande el deseo que todos tenían de ver el parto. Abrióse, en fin, una gran concavidad, que descubrió muertos muertos y vivos que lo parecían; metió uno el brazo, y asió de una doncella, que el palparle el corazón daba señales de tener vida; otros hicieron lo mismo, y cada uno sacó su presa, y algunos, pensando sacar vivos, sacaban muertos: que no todas veces los pescadores son dichosos. (281–82)

Suffering and death are clearly stylized in this quote, presented through an ironic filter that prevents us from identifying with the victims or feeling their pain. Instead we are invited to approach the rescue operation as if we were witnessing a fishing competition. The fishing allegory takes the tragic edge off. The bodies that come out of the sinking (pregnant) ship may now be seen as trophies whose value depends on whether they are actually dead (“muertos muertos”) or just look dead (“vivos que lo parecían”). Thus, the focus of the description shifts from the pain of the victims to the skill and good or bad fortune of the “fishermen” (“pescadores”).

In its trivialization and caricaturization of human suffering, this passage is certainly reminiscent of the type of black humor that is the trademark of Monty Python’s films and television shows. But we must also note that not every episode of the narrative is punctuated by humor in the same degree. Some chapters of *Persiles* are practically devoid of humor, at least in any traditionally recognizable form. And yet, I wouldn’t dare say that we must take even those chapters “seriously” in the sense of being content with a straightforward reading of them. This is precisely the point at which our current approach should be most useful, for, as we shall see below, our familiarization with the workings of perspective anamorphosis allows us to devise oblique or distorted images of Counter-Reformation culture even in those episodes and situations that do not seem particularly humorous.

Looking Awry

In his book *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), Slavoj Žižek maintains that ideology is the effect of an “error of perspective” that distorts our view of the world in such a way that we see meaning and supreme plenitude in those cultural symbols that hide the contradictions and radical contingency of our individual and collective identity (see especially chapter 3). Žižek suggests that scholars involved in ideological criticism have something to learn from the cultivators of perspective anamorphosis. He argues that we must aim to reveal the ideological error of perspective by creating awry views of the field of identities, much in the same way that anamorphic devices—

he cites Holbein's *Ambassadors*—construct oblique perspectives that dissolve the consistency of the frontal view. As he puts it in the section entitled “The Ideological Anamorphosis”:

The criticism of ideology must perform a somewhat homologous operation: if we look at the element which holds together the ideological edifice, at this “phallic,” erected Guarantee of Meaning, from the right (or, more precisely—politically speaking—left) perspective, we are able to recognize in it the embodiment of a lack, of a chasm of non-sense gaping in the midst of ideological meaning. (99–100)

I believe that such is precisely the effect—if not necessarily the intention—of much of Cervantes's writing, including *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* and—as we shall see in the next chapter—some of his theatrical pieces. In the case of *Persiles*, we can find oblique views of the myths that sustain the ideological field of Counter-Reformation Spain, especially the belief in “our” spiritual superiority as leaders of the Christian Roman world.

The entire narrative of *Persiles* orbits around the symbolic presence of Rome, the erected Guarantee of Meaning (to use Žižek's notion) that justifies the imperial endeavor. While Rome is the final destination of the protagonists and their companions, Spain and Portugal are regarded as spiritually rich countries, even sacred lands, signaling perhaps a displacement of the City of God toward the Iberian peninsula. This might explain Antonio's hyperbolic praise of Lisbon. As he tells his daughter Constanza: “Agora sabrás, bárbara mía, del modo que has de servir a Dios [...] agora verás los ricos templos en que es adorado; verás juntamente las católicas ceremonias con que se sirve, y notarás como la caridad cristiana está en su punto [...] esta es la tierra que da al cielo santo y copiosísimo tributo” (430–31). The narrator's comments reinforce the notion that Iberia is the Promised Land, at least in the eyes of the pilgrims: “les pareció que ya habían llegado a la tierra de promisión que tanto deseaban” (430).

Auristela has a similar reaction when she first arrives in Spain. The young lady hastily thanks the heavens for delivering her, along with her companions, to the most peaceful and sacred region of the world: “Ya los cielos, a quien doy mil

gracias por ello, nos ha[n] traído a España [...] ya podemos tender los pasos seguros, porque, según la fama, que sobre todas las regiones del mundo, de pacífica y de santa, tiene ganada España, bien nos podemos prometer seguro viaje” (460). It is interesting that Auristela focuses precisely on Spain’s “fame” (*fama*) at a time in which the international reputation of the Spanish Empire was at its nadir because of the vast circulation of the infamous black legend. Despite this significant detail, we could nonetheless be tempted to take Auristela’s and Antonio’s words literally, and perhaps even attribute them to the patriotic and religious fervor of Cervantes, but the notoriously violent nature of the Catholic world represented in *Persiles* suggests otherwise. In effect, most of the episodes that take place on Catholic land underscore the violent, egotistical, and vile disposition of many of its inhabitants.

The pilgrims have their first encounter with the Spanish brand of Catholic justice shortly after Auristela’s enthusiastic description of Spain as the most sacrosanct and peaceful of nations. The group is resting on the side of the road, when suddenly a young man comes out of the bushes bleeding from a mortal wound. The killer’s sword is still buried in the man’s back as he falls to the ground. Periandro hurries to help him but realizes that he is already dead. As the pilgrims are going through the man’s belongings looking for some clue that might help them establish his identity, they are quickly surrounded by the troops of the Inquisition (“cuadrilleros”), who eventually seize and imprison them for alleged crimes of assault, murder, and theft. The narrator’s account of the events that follow focuses on the corruption of public officials:

Ricla, la tesorera, que sabía muy poco o nada de la condición de escribanos y procuradores, ofreció a uno, de secreto, que andaba allí en público, dando muestras de ayudarles, no sé qué cantidad de dineros porque tomase a cargo su negocio. Lo echó a perder del todo, porque, en oliendo los sátrapas de la pluma que tenían lana los peregrinos, quisieron trasquilarlos, como es uso y costumbre. (469–70)

The final words of the quote suggest that bribery and extortion are common practices (“uso y costumbre”) among Spanish public officials (“sátrapas de la pluma”). We should note that

these poignant accusations of corruption amount to what we would nowadays call “an institutional critique,” since they are aimed at the entire justice system.

We witness another gruesome outburst of violence just a few pages later. This time a nobleman has been shot in the back during a brawl instigated by a group of soldiers. These shocking events throw some new light on the interventions of Antonio and Auristela, whose inflamed words regarding the proverbial sanctity, charitable nature, and peaceful demeanor of the Catholic world may now be perceived from a more down-to-earth perspective as empty rhetorical gestures. As a matter of fact, the pervasive presence of violence in this final section of *Persiles* is reminiscent of the first few chapters of the narrative, which take place in the northern territories. In this sense, de Armas Wilson is fundamentally correct when she maintains that Rome (and by extension the Catholic world) is presented as another Barbaric Isle. From this standpoint, the gruesome events of 1.2 may be seen as an oblique re-enactment of imperial-Catholic mythology. Let us recall that the human sacrifices that take place in the Barbaric Isle are inspired by the collective belief in the imminent birth of a mighty king who shall conquer the world:

[esta ínsula] es habitada de unos bárbaros, gente indómita y cruel, los cuales tienen entre sí por cosa inviolable y cierta (persuadidos, o ya del demonio, o ya de un antiguo hechicero a quien ellos tienen por sapientísimo varón) que de entre ellos ha de salir un rey que conquiste y gane gran parte del mundo. Este rey que esperan no saben quién ha de ser y, para saberlo, aquel hechicero les dio esta orden: que sacrificasen todos los hombres que a su ínsula llegasen, de cuyos corazones (digo, de cada uno de por sí) hiciesen polvos y los diesen a beber a los bárbaros más principales de la ínsula, con expresa orden que el que los pasase, sin torcer el rostro ni dar muestras de que le sabía mal, le alzasen por su rey. Pero no ha de ser este el que conquiste el mundo, sino un hijo suyo. (127–29)

The belief in the birth of a mighty king whose chosen son would be destined to conquer much of the world could be connected with the figures of Emperor Charles V and his son Philip II, and also with the Sebastianist legends that foresee the

imminent arrival of a powerful Portuguese dynasty. From the oblique perspective provided by the savage practices taking place in the Barbaric Isle, we may actually devise what lies behind the official notion that the Spanish monarchy (and perhaps the Portuguese monarchy as well) has been called upon by God to carry the banner of the Counter-Reformation to the four corners of the earth. When all is said and done what remains is, as in Holbein's *Ambassadors*, a picture of death.

This anamorphic image of Counter-Reformation and imperial mythology is reinforced by the frequent problematization of Manichean conceptions of Good vs. Evil and Self vs. Other. It is not difficult to see that most episodes of *Persiles* refract traditional, clear-cut distinctions of Good vs. Evil, for, as the narrator says in 4.12, “el bien y el mal distan tan poco el uno del otro que son como dos líneas concurrentes, que, aunque parten de apartados y diferentes principios, acaban en un punto” (711). Even more importantly, the boundaries that separate “us”—civilized, morally and culturally superior beings—from “them”—barbarians, heretics—seem sometimes stubbornly fluid, practically non-existent, while they are, at other times, grossly overstated. We could say that this type of perspective oscillation reveals the arbitrariness and futility of such categorizations.

The constant appearance of hybrid characters described as Spanish or Italian and simultaneously barbarians (“el bárbaro español,” “el bárbaro italiano”) deconstructs culturally based distinctions of Self vs. Other. We can also find “barbarian gentlemen,” “discreet barbarians,” “barbarian ladies or damsels,” and so on. In fact, the narrative frequently toys with the idea that social identity is but a matter of dress, as the narrator explicitly suggests in 1.5: “A este punto llegaba el bárbaro español (que este título le daba su traje)” (161). One of the most notorious examples of cultural hybridization is the religious holiday of la Monda, which, as the following digression indicates, was originally dedicated to Venus and is currently a Christian celebration in honor of the Virgin Mary: “[La fiesta de la Monda] trae su origen de muchos años antes que Cristo naciese, reducida por los cristianos a tan buen punto y término que, si entonces se celebraba en honra de la diosa Venus por la gentilidad, ahora se celebra en honor y alabanza de la Virgen

de las Vírgenes” (485–86). Clearly, this remarkable case of religious syncretism underscores the hopelessly hybrid nature of the beliefs and rituals that define our social identity.

On the other hand, as I have said before, we can also find passages that reproduce—and perhaps overstate—mythical conceptions of the Other. Thus, the exchange that takes place in 1.18 between Rutilio, Arnaldo, and Mauricio regarding the alleged existence of werewolves in England evokes—somewhat ironically—“our” belief in the monstrous nature of the Other. The same applies to Zenotia’s self-portrait as a witch astrologer, which is a clear allusion to the Christian belief in the dark powers of the *moriscos*. This mythical image is called up by Zenotia in the midst of her life story, which includes some notoriously poignant comments regarding the Inquisition’s relentless persecution of her kind: “Salí de mi patria habrá cuatro años, huyendo de la vigilancia que tienen los mastines veladores que en aquel reino tienen del católico rebaño; mi estirpe es agareña; mis ejercicios, los de Zoroastes, y en ellos soy única [...] pídemelo, que haré que a esta claridad suceda en un punto oscura noche; o ya, si quieres ver temblar la tierra, pelear los vientos, alterarse el mar” (327).

Just as indicative of this hyperbolic re-enactment of mythical images of the Other is Mauricio and Transila’s combined account of the wedding rituals that are customary in their barbarian fatherland (“bárbara patria,” as Transila calls it). The laws of Hibernia (such is the name of their homeland) require that the bride be sexually initiated by her husband’s brothers and other close relatives. In the words of Mauricio, this is a barbaric custom that goes against the laws of honesty and decorum: “costumbre bárbara y maldita, que va contra todas las leyes de la honestidad y del buen decoro” (207). For her part, Transila points out that Hibernia’s customs go against those guarded by any well-ordered republic: “[Hibernia’s] deshonestas y bárbaras costumbres van contra las que guarda cualquier ordenada república” (209–10).

It is interesting that Mauricio and Transila are completely detached from their cultural heritage, as if they devise a set of universal values (which happen to coincide with the values of Christianity) against which to weigh the moral validity (or in this case lack thereof) of their own culture. This aspect of their

account is underlined by Mauricio himself, who recalls living his youth in compliance with the customs of his fatherland, except in the case of those that did not seem leveled with reason: “Seguí las costumbres de mi patria, a lo menos en cuanto a las que parecían ser niveladas con la razón, y, en las que no, con apariencias fingidas mostraba seguirlas, que tal vez la disimulación es provechosa” (206). By his own account, Mauricio had been forced to hide his religious (Catholic, as it turns out) sentiments in his own homeland, just as the Spanish *moriscos* had no choice but to simulate their conversion to the Christian faith in order to elude the threat of Inquisitorial persecution.

Although this connection could be a mere coincidence, the narrative’s obsessive repetition of the expulsion motif suggests otherwise. Thus, the *morisca* Zenotia, who incidentally is addressed by the narrator as “Spanish Zenotia” (“la española Zenotia”), comes back to this issue in her conversation with Antonio: “Dígame, en fin, bárbaro discreto, que la persecución de los que llaman inquisidores en España me arrancó de mi patria: que, cuando se sale por fuerza della, antes se puede llamar arrancada que salida” (329). While Zenotia blames the Inquisition for her misfortunes, another *morisco*—“el jadraque”—would take the opposite road in blaming his infamous race and thoroughly exonerating the Spanish authorities. As he exclaims in what is referred to—somewhat ironically, I suspect—as a “heavenly trance”:

—¡Ea, mancebo generoso; ea, rey invencible Atropella, rompe, desbarata todo género de inconvenientes, y déjanos a España tersa, limpia, y desembarazada de esta mi mala casta, que tanto la asombra y menoscaba! ¡Ea, consejero tan prudente como ilustre, nuevo Atlante del peso de esta monarquía! ¡Ayuda y facilita con tus consejos a esta necesaria transmigración; llénense estos mares de tus galeras, cargadas del inútil peso de la generación agarena; vayan arrojadas a las contrarias riberas las zarzas, las malezas y las otras yerbas que estorban el crecimiento de la fertilidad y abundancia cristiana! Que si los pocos hebreos que pasaron a Egipto multiplicaron tanto que en su salida se contaron más de seiscientas mil familias, ¿qué se podrá temer de éstos, que son más y viven más holgadamente? No los esquilman las religiones, no los entresacan las Indias, no los

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quintan las guerras; todos se casan, todos, o los más, engendran, de do se sigue y se infiere que su multiplicación y aumento ha de ser innumerable. ¡Ea, pues, vuelvo a decir, vayan, vayan, señor, y deja la taza de tu reino resplandeciente como el sol y hermosa como el cielo! (558–60)

I have decided to reproduce the passage in its entirety for two reasons: first, so that we may fully appreciate the uncanny familiarity of this “official” image of the *moriscos* (Who hasn’t heard at one time or another similar diatribes against Moors or gypsies or Jews or—ironically—Hispanics?); and secondly, because the extraordinary accumulation of derogatory—or, in this case, self-derogatory—terms suggests that what is meant in the visionary speech of “el jadraque” might be the opposite of what is stated, which is of course the classic definition of irony. These words are clearly reminiscent of Ricote’s praise of Philip III and Don Bernardino de Velasco for their dedication to realizing the ideal of a “clean” or “purified” Spain (see the previous chapter). Once again, the absurdity of these anti-*morisco* diatribes is highlighted by the unlikely circumstances of their enunciation. The choice of subject of enunciation—which is but the victim himself—forces us to reassess the meaning of the racist statement from an oblique viewpoint.

Thus, I would like to conclude this chapter by insisting on the idea that *Persiles* invites us to entertain the thought that the notions of Self and Other are just as intimately connected as the convergent lines of Good and Evil. Ramón del Valle-Inclán used to explain the aesthetic logic behind his theatrical “esperpentos” by arguing that literature must create deformed images of the world in order to compensate for the distortions with which we perceive it. *Persiles* might well be Cervantes’s compensatory “esperpentic,” or, as I like to put it, “anamorphic” vision of Counter-Reformation and imperial utopias. After all, only two graphemes separate the toponym *Iberia* from the proverbial Winterland of “Hibernia”; and the “Spanish H” is silent!

Chapter Six

A “Symptomatic” View of the Honor System in Cervantes’s Theater

Honor and the Gender Roles

Spain’s obsession with honor and “purity of blood” (*limpieza de sangre*) reaches its peak in the early stages of the seventeenth century coinciding with the deepening of its ongoing social crisis (see Castro, *De la edad conflictiva*). It is as though the Spanish state were looking to compensate for its bankruptcy and the notorious failure of its economic and social structures by clinging ever more firmly to its symbolic capital. It could hardly be surprising that conflicts of honor and bloodline concerns take center stage in Spanish baroque culture, from Quevedo’s satirical sonnets, to Lopean and Calderonian productions, to the best-selling picaresque novels of the early 1600s.

According to Maravall, the notion of honor, which was being propagated across all sectors of society by the popular *comedia nueva*, works essentially as a “religious” call (“religión de la obediencia”) that demands everyone’s submission to the system of authority (see especially *Teatro y literatura* and *La cultura del barroco*). This is not to say that readers or spectators might not be able to uncover in these plays important information regarding the incongruity of the honor system. On the contrary, as Francisco Ayala has pointed out, while it is clear that the Spanish *comedia* [he is referring mainly to Lopean and Calderonian productions] functions as a means of exaltation of official values, we may still be able to discover in these texts traces of unintended revelations (122). This is consistent with the Marxist notion according to which the secrets of ideology are indelibly written in its own surface in the form of “symptoms,” which may be defined as points of breakdown

of the symbolic order. These symptoms are “*heterogeneous* to a given ideological field and at the same time *necessary* for that field to achieve its closure” (Žižek, *The Sublime* 21). Of course, classic Marxist models focus on the “symptomatic” position of the proletariat (the “other class”), which is viewed as the “heterogeneous” but “necessary” element in capitalist societies and, therefore, the point of breakdown of bourgeois ideology.¹

As we look to reveal the incongruities of the honor system in seventeenth-century Spain, we might concentrate on the “symptomatic perspectives” of the “other gender” and the “other races.” One of the unifying characteristics of Cervantes’s narrative and theatrical production is precisely its attention to “other views” (in this strict sense), which often result in oblique renderings of official values and ideals. In his book *The Unifying Concept: Approaches to the Structure of Cervantes’s “Comedias,”* Edward Friedman argues that Cervantes’s plays are organized around a central concept: “The source of unity is not the plot but the concept which determines both the linear and circular patterns. [...] The structural center of the play is a concept, explored and analyzed through autonomous episodes analogically related to the concept” (33–38). According to Friedman, while Lopean productions achieve unity “by developing complications around a single action” (4), the theater of Cervantes “serves an idea” (38).

Friedman draws from Casaldueiro’s categorization of Cervantes as an author of the first baroque who is not primarily concerned with unity of action (“*unidad de acción*”) but with “mental unity” (“*unidad mental*”).² Yet, he takes Casaldueiro’s notion a step further in order to incorporate in his analysis “Cervantes’ preoccupation with multiperspectivism” (138). In the end, Friedman comes very close to identifying the “unifying concept” of Cervantes’s theater with a perspectivistic understanding of the world: “Cervantes offers a major structural innovation, a means of achieving unity through analogic episodes based on a single concept. This unifying concept allows for multiple visions of man and of the world around and beyond him” (139). For my part, I intend to connect these “multiple visions” of which Friedman speaks with the symptomatic presence of the “other gender” and the “other races” that emerge as points of breakdown of the honor system and

the myths of Christian superiority associated with the notion of *limpieza*.³

Needless to say the call of honor interpellates men and women separately and differently. For a man who adheres to the code, honor is both an obligation to protect (and control) his dependents and, simultaneously, a mandate to obey the king and his representatives. A woman's honor, on the other hand, is largely measured by whether she is able to effectively guard her virtue, and also by how willing she is to submit to the will of her father or husband. The attitude of Doña Mencía in Calderón's *El médico de su honra* may be said to exemplify what is required of her gender under the guise of honor. Doña Mencía represents the lady or *dama* who is defined by the high quality of her noble bloodline and indeed by her spectacular triumph over the temptations of the flesh. The following monologue illustrates her exemplary acceptance of the sacrificial demands of honor:

¡Oh, quién pudiera, cielos,
con licencia de su honor
hacer aquí sentimientos!
¡Oh quién pudiera dar voces,
y romper con el silencio
cárceles de nieve, donde
está aprisionado el fuego!
[...] Mas ¿qué digo?
¿Qué es esto cielos, qué es esto?
Yo soy quien soy [...]
porque ya, con más acuerdo,
ni para sentir soy mía. (130)

The speech of Doña Mencía focuses on the conflict between her feelings and desires and the prohibition of the Law that she has internalized in the form of what Lacan would call an ego ideal: "I am who I am" ("yo soy quien soy"). This ego ideal, which demands that she yield to the sacrificial principle of honor, is depicted as a prison that contains the unruly appetites of the flesh ("cárceles de nieve, donde está aprisionado el fuego"). Moreover, the sacrificial formula that condenses the mandate of honor—"yo soy quien soy"—is, in the last instance, an intimate reminder that she belongs to another ("ni para sentir soy mía").⁴

The conventional portrayal of women in Lopean and Calderonian *comedias* is certainly coherent with patriarchal notions of gender difference. While plays such as Lope's *Fuente Ovejuna* appear to present a potentially contestatory depiction of women, the active role that female characters play in this and other Lopean *comedias* does not result, as we might presume, in a questioning of the values that sustain the masculinist system of authority. Rather, *Fuente Ovejuna* produces a reification of the masculinist ideals encoded in the call of honor. To illustrate this point, we might recall the well-known passage in which Laurencia instigates the commoners to rebel against the abusive *comendador*:

Liebres cobardes nacistes;
bárbaros sois, no españoles.
¡Gallinas! ¡Vuestras mujeres
sufrís que otros hombres gozen!
¡Poneos ruelas en la cinta!
¿Para qué os ceñís estoques?
[...] ¡Y que os han de tirar piedras,
hilanderas, maricones,
amujerados, cobardes!
[...] y yo me huelgo, medio hombres,
porque quede sin mujeres
esta villa honrada, y torne
aquel siglo de Amazonas,
eterno espanto del orbe. (159–60)

The speech of Laurencia assimilates femininity (“amujerados”), cowardice (“cobardes”), lack of patriotism (“bárbaros sois, no españoles”), impotence (“medio hombres”), and sexual deviancy (“maricones”) into a striking image of abjection. Laurencia not only uses the notion of femininity as an insult, she also demands that men act according to the call of honor, which is precisely the symbolic mandate that justifies and reinforces the practices of subjugation, stigmatization, and repression of women in Counter-Reformation Spain. She even threatens the commoners of her hometown with the potential extinction of “women” and a return of the “terrible Amazons,” unless they fulfill their social duties according to the dominant ideals of masculinity signified by honor.

As Mitchell Greenberg (1994) says: “her diatribe is a poignant plea for the men to be (act as) men, so that she can resituate herself in the community as a woman, even if that situation be a subjected one” (56). Thus, despite Malveena McKendrick’s assertion that a “woman with a sense of honor is conscious of her worth and dignity as a person” and would therefore “be well on the road towards equality” (261), I see Laurencia’s words in *Fuente Ovejuna*, and also the actions typical of the popular *comedia* archetype of the “vengeful woman” (“mujer vengadora”), as dramatic gestures that ultimately uphold the code of honor, which is the very keystone that justifies the existing social divisions—including those that relegate women to a subaltern role.⁵

By contrast, many of the feminine characters that appear in Cervantes’s theater including some noblewomen—challenge established moral and social codes, and yet are not punished for their transgressions. This is the case of Zahara, who in *El trato de Argel* defies the prohibition of the Law in her determination to seduce her Christian slave Aurelio:

imposible es contrastar
las fuerças de mi deseo. (13)

And later,

¡Dejame a mi con Mahoma,
que agora no es mi señor,
porque soy sierva de Amor,
que el alma subjeta y doma! (15)⁶

It is interesting that the male Aurelio is the character most concerned about his virtue. This point may be illustrated by the following monologue in which Aurelio weighs his sexual desires against the moral code:

Aurelio, ¿dónde vas? ¿Para do mueves
el vagaroso paso? ¿Quien te guia?
¿Con tan poco temor de Dios te atreves
a contentar tu loca fantasía?
Las ocasiones fáciles y leves
que el lascíbo regalo al alma enbia,

tienen de persuadirte y derribarte,
y al vano y torpe amor blando entregarte
[...] ¡Christiano soy, y e de vivir christiano;
y, aunque a terminos tristes conuèido,
dadas o promesa, astucia o arte,
no haran que un punto de mi Dios me aparte! (72)

The religious call (“I am Christian”) is presented in the guise of a prohibition (“Christian I must live”) that is formulated in the name of the Father (“my God”). As we can see, Aurelio’s reaction is the exact opposite to that of Zahara. While Zahara refuses to sacrifice her body to the Law, Aurelio is ready to acknowledge his symbolic debt: “Christiano soy, y e de vivir christiano.” The expressions “derribarte” and “entregarte” evoke masculinist allegories of love as an act of aggression, but the traditional gender roles have been inverted. It is the male character who is placed in the position of having to defend his virtue against the toppling attempts of his mistress. Although we could attribute the sexual aggressiveness of Zahara to the fact that she is a Muslim, and not a Christian lady, we should also keep in mind, that the inversion of gender roles is—as Molho reminds us—“an essential aspect of the Cervantine text” (“Cervantes and the ‘Terrible Mothers’” 254).

From this standpoint, one of Cervantes’s most interesting plays is, no doubt, *El laberinto de amor*. This work contains three love stories featuring sexually aggressive ladies who are never punished for their defiance of the honor system, but are actually rewarded with the “rendition” of those men whom they so aggressively pursue. Incidentally, although many of Cervantes’s dramatic pieces elude the traditional Lopean happy ending, *El laberinto de amor* concludes with a multiple wedding that celebrates the transgressive actions of the protagonists.

Friedman examines *El laberinto de amor* in connection with *La entretenida*. According to Friedman (*The Unifying*), while *El laberinto de amor* “copies Lope’s formula,” *La entretenida* “mocks this formula [...] in its presentation of collective failure” (116). Although I am convinced by Friedman’s argument regarding *La entretenida*, I see the resolution of *El laberinto* as another form of parodic inversion of the Lopean model insofar as it endorses the transgressive behavior of the protagonists.

Indeed, if there were a moral to these love stories, that moral might be “act in such a way as to bring about the conditions that may satisfy your desire!” Or, as Porcia eloquently puts it:

El hilo de la razón
no haze al caso que prevengas;
todo el toque està en que tengas
un gallardo coraçon,
no para entrar en peleas,
que en ellas no es bien te pongas
sino con que te dispongas
a alcançar lo que desseas. [...] (230)⁷

Thus, *El laberinto de amor* seems to validate Cascardi's assertion that “Cervantes resists attempts to situate the self in relation to the social order [...] as the comedia and its sacrificial code of honor attempted to do” (“The Archeology” 43–44). The story of Julia's trials illustrates this point. Julia's account of the circumstances of her escape from her father's household—a world that in the absence of a mother figure is marked by the absolutization of the paternal prohibition—underscores the conflict between her sexual desires and her symbolic debt:

Teniamme mi padre
encerrada do el sol entrava apenas,
era muerta mi madre,
y eran mi compañía las almenas
de torres levantadas,
sobre vanos temores fabricadas.
Avivóme el desseo
la privacion de lo que no tenia
—que crece, a lo que creo,
la hambre que imagina carestia—;
mas no era de manera
que yo no respondiesse a ser quien era.
[...] En fin, yo, de curiosa,
un agujero hize en una puerta,
que a la vista medrosa,
y aun al alma, mostro ventana abierta
para ver a Manfredo.
Vile, y quedè qual declarar no puedo. (279–80)

At first, Julia is willing to contain her sexual impulses on account of her social obligations, but her curiosity and the sight

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of Manfredo will change that. We can see that Julia's detachment from her social identity anchored in the realm of honor is marked by the appearance of Manfredo, who immediately becomes the object of her affection. Julia's account underscores her own feeling of self-estrangement: "Vile, y quedè qual declarar no puedo." From this point on and up until the time of her marriage, Julia will live outside of the honor system. Her adventures may be said to mirror Porcia's resolution to let herself be carried away by the winds of desire:

El que padece tormenta,
si es que de piloto sabe,
si puede, guie la nave
adonde menos la sienta.
Yo en la mia un puerto veo
a los ojos de mi fe,
y alla me encaminaré
con los soplos del desseo. (267)

The words of Julia's cousin, along with the actions of all three protagonists—Julia, Porcia, and Rosamira—may remind us of the life of Lázaro de Tormes and the exploits of Pedro de Urdemalas. Although the protagonists of *El laberinto de amor* are wealthy ladies, while Lázaro and Pedro are dispossessed nobodies, they all find ways to fulfill their desires on the margins of the honor system. This is consistent with El Saffar and de Armas Wilson's observation that Cervantes "challenges the assumptions of that paternal power which the dominant social order promulgates as a norm" (14).

While Cervantes's full-length plays are not devoid of humor, his interludes offer a more obviously carnivalesque treatment of sex and the gender roles. *El viejo celoso*, for example, is a story about the trials and tribulations of an adulterous young lady who is never punished for her transgressions. The humorous spirit of this short piece is underscored by the fact that Doña Lorenza's encounter with her lover takes place right under the nose of her jealous and controlling husband. Clearly, *El viejo celoso* is a festive celebration of sex that has nothing to do with the cult of honor characteristic of Lopean and Calderonian comedias. Another of Cervantes's interludes, *El retablo de las maravillas*, creates an atmosphere equally

charged with eroticism, but here the focus is on legitimacy (or rather, illegitimacy), on gender roles, which are either twisted or inverted, and—as we shall see below—on the question of *limpieza*.

In his classic study *Cervantes: raíces folklóricas* (1976), Molho argues that Chanfalla, Chirinos, and Rabelín represent an inverted image of the traditional family marked by sexual ambiguity and the perversion of all relations: “el mistificador múltiple del *Retablo de las Maravillas* no es sino la imagen de la anti-familia, de una familia negativa en que todas las relaciones, radicalmente turbadas, se pervierten en ritos equívocos” (175). The names of the spectators of the magic tableau also suggest sexual ambiguity or even sexual inversion, especially Benito Repollo, his daughter Teresa Repolla, Juan Castrado and his daughter Juana Castrada. The patronymics of the founding couple Antón Castrado–Juana Macha (we could think of this first couple as a castrated Adam and a phallic Eve) are a perfect illustration of this playful inversion of the gender roles. As Molho says: “El resultado es la formación de una pareja ‘primitiva’: Antón Castrado–Juana Macha, que opone al hombre castrado, es decir, desvirilizado, una mujer portapene, que, sin dejar de ser mujer, acapara en sí todos los atributos de la virilidad” (178).

A close look at the interaction of the audience with the monstrous figures of the magic tableau reveals a multidirectional flow of sexual energy that defies traditional gender roles in more than one way. This includes Castrada's willingness, even eagerness, to interact with the phallic figures of the magic tableau, as well as Benito's somewhat shocking admission that the water of the Jordan River has covered his back all the way down to his anus: “Por las espaldas me ha calado el agua hasta la canal maestra” (230).⁸ We should recall that the water from the Jordan River has been presented as a magic liqueur that improves upon the beauty of women, but which is also capable of altering the color of a man's beard—a practice that is commonly associated with effeminate behavior and/or homosexual tendencies. Capacho is another character who admits to having been touched by the magic liqueur: “me alcanzó un poco en los bigotes, y apostaré que los tengo rubios como un oro” (230).⁹

Thus, as Molho brilliantly points out, whether we focus on the characters' equivocal patronymics, or on the carefully sexualized figures of the magic tableau and the spectators' interaction with them, we can see that *El retablo de las maravillas* mocks the rituals of masculine affirmation in the festive and carnivalesque style that is typical of the *entremés* genre. This view of sex and the gender roles could be described as "symptomatic" insofar as it fixes on the points of breakdown of the patriarchal order, especially the crucial issues of masculine honor and legitimacy. However, it is Cervantes's concern with Christian representations of the "other races" that most strongly evokes the theory behind the Marxist notion of the "social symptom." Therefore, I intend to dedicate the following section to underscore the applicability of a slightly modified version of this concept to the study of Cervantine perspectivism. The core of my argument is that Cervantes's oblique treatment of the Jewish question in *El retablo de las maravillas* confirms the fact that the mythical figure of the Jew is an allegory that aids in the justification of the system of authority of Counter-Reformation Spain.¹⁰

The "Other Races" as Social Symptoms

According to Cascardi ("The Archeology"), during the early modern period, cultures became increasingly "conscious of their own contingency in historical terms" (49). Smith ("The Captive's Tale") focuses precisely on this aspect in his reading of *Don Quixote*. He argues that in Cervantes's novel "certain practices held to be natural (such as the transmission of the name of the father) are relativized, denaturalized" (231). I see this relativizing drive at work in several of Cervantes's theatrical pieces. The confrontation between Muslim and Christian worldviews in *El trato de Argel* and *La gran sultana*, for example, produces a kind of vertigo that shakes Christian assumptions of cultural centrality. In *El trato de Argel*, a Muslim king uses the expression "[i]caur! [...] Cito, cifuti, breguedi" (95) to insult a Spanish fugitive. As the editors, Rudolph Schevill and Adolfo Bonilla, explain, the word *caur* is often employed in Muslim sources to address Christians as well as anyone who professes a religion other than Islam (271).

Moreover, Schevill and Bonilla translate the royal insult "Cito, cifuti, breguedi" as "Silencio, cornudo judío!" even as they cite Villalón's *Viaje de Turquía* to document that the word *breguede* was commonly used to address infidels in general, whether of Jewish or Christian origin (272–73).

These images of Christians as "infidels" remind us of the arbitrariness of Christian representations of the "other races." We might recall a similar passage in *Persiles* that reproduces a picture of the Christians as the Turks might see them: "el *rospeni*, el *manahora* y el *denimaniyoc* son palabras y razones turquescas, encaminadas a la deshonor y vituperio de los cautivos cristianos" (535). The editor, Carlos Romero, cites Asim Tanis, who translates *rospeni* as "hijo de puta," *manahora* as "mira que te j...," and *denimaniyoc* as "infidel." Similarly, *La gran sultana* offers insights into the arbitrariness of the contents that define "the Other" as essentially different from "Us" insofar as s/he is said to maintain a special relation with the threatening forces of evil. One of these passages is a dialogue between two Jewish men that takes place in the first act of the play. In this exchange, one of the Jewish characters admonishes the other to get away from the window to escape the dark powers of a Christian demon:

Quitate, Zabulon, de la ventana,
que esse perro español es un demonio,
y te hara pedaços la cabeça
con solo que te escupa y que te acierte. (128)¹¹

While one can certainly find many instances in Golden Age culture where the "other races" are portrayed from a Christian point of view as terrible enemies who possess demonic powers,¹² Cervantes holds in front of the Christian reader a mirror in which he is to see himself as they might see him, as "abject other." The same applies to the following verbal exchange between the Spanish Madrigal and his master, the Gran Cadi. In this case we see how Madrigal is able to profit from the Muslim belief in the demonic powers of "the Christian other":

Madrigal: Pues ya hablo, y digo ansi:
 Que me vengan luego a ver
 treinta escudos, que han de ser

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para comprar al instante
un papagayo elegante
que un indio trae a vender.
De las Indias del Poniente
el paxaro sin segundo
viene a enseñar suficiente
a la ignorante del mundo
sabia y rica y pobre gente.
Lo que dize te dire,
pues ya sabes que lo se
por ciencia divina y alta.
Cadi: Ve por ellos, que sin falta
en mi casa los dare. (200–01)

Madrigal takes advantage of his abject position in the Muslim world to represent himself as a powerful sorcerer. He even invokes the doubly abject image of the “Amerindian other” in order to reinforce his self-alienating portrait.

The above quotes from *El trato de Argel*, *Persiles*, and *La gran sultana* seem to confirm de Armas Wilson’s observation that Cervantes parodies the Christian imperialist discourse that assimilates Moors, Jews, and Indians into a unified mythical image of otherness (“The Matter” 239).¹³ On the other hand, Cervantes’s most radical critique of the ideological field of Counter-Reformation Spain involves a specific problematization of the code of honor and the myth of the superiority of the Christian genealogy. Cervantes often ridicules the code of honor, which he sees as an archaic notion that renders the subject powerless to act in accordance with the demands of new situations in a fast-changing world. In *El trato de Argel*, the Moorish pirate Mami makes fun of the outrageous arrogance of the Spanish Christians who risk their properties, their freedom, and ultimately their lives in the name of a code of honor that prevents them from rowing—which is of course considered a form of manual labor unfit for honorable gentlemen:

Pero allá tiene la honrra
el christiano en tal extremo,
que asir en un trånçe el remo,
le pareçe que es deshonrra;
y mientras ellos allá
en sus trece estan honrrados,

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nosotros, dellos cargados,
venimos sin honrra aca. (37)

In this passage Cervantes shows the ridiculous aspect of honor through the eyes of someone who is not invested in the fantasy that supports this form of social identification. We should note that the Moorish pirate occupies a “symptomatic” or oblique position in relation to the Christian mode of representation of both the world and the self that is structured in reference to the anchoring point of honor.

In his essay “How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?” (1994), Žižek argues that *social reality* is fundamentally an “ethical construction” supported by our willingness to act as if we believe in its premises: “*as if* we believe in the almightiness of bureaucracy, *as if* the President incarnates the Will of the People, *as if* the Party expresses the objective interest of the working class” (318). In the context of seventeenth-century Spain, we could say that the Christian subjects of the Spanish monarchy are called upon to act as if they believe that the king is God’s chosen representative on earth, as if their Christian bloodline is intrinsically superior to Moorish and Jewish heritage, as if their honor is their most important possession.

Whether they truly believe in these notions that structure their social reality is to a certain extent irrelevant; what is important is that they act them out. In support of this argument we may recall the historical fact that in the initial phase of the institutional push for a unified Christian Spain, religious authorities were not primarily concerned with whether or not the newly converted Jewish and Muslim elements sincerely believed in the Christian dogma. Instead, *conversos* and *moriscos* were simply required to act out their conversion by participating in the rituals and celebrations of Christianity.

It is not difficult to see that the tricksters of *El retablo de las maravillas* profit from their understanding of this essential aspect of the process of social identification.¹⁴ Chanfalla invites the town leaders to experience the fantasy upon which their identity is based, that is, to celebrate the basis of their integration into society. The initial reaction of the spectators of the magic tableau confirms that they too understand that what is at stake is their social identity. Thus, when Chanfalla reminds

the town officials of the qualities that the audience must possess to be able to see the figures of the magic tableau (legitimacy and *limpieza*), Benito's retort is a gesture of self-affirmation: "A mi cargo queda eso, y séle decir que, por mi parte, puedo ir seguro a juicio, pues tengo el padre alcalde; cuatro dedos de enjundia de cristiano viejo rancioso tengo sobre los cuatro costados de mi linaje: ¡miren si veré el tal Retablo!" (222). Capacho's reaction is even more telling: "Todos le pensamos ver, señor Benito Repollo" (222). While we might read Capacho's statement as "we are all planning on seeing it," or perhaps, "we shall all pretend to see it," it is Castrada's warning to her cousin Teresa that most candidly shows the spectator's willingness and determination "to act out their belief": "y pues sabes las condiciones que han de tener los miradores del Retablo, no te descuides, que sería una gran desgracia" (225).

Of course the spectators must honor Chanfalla's premise that *conversos* are blind to the marvels of the tableau, because such a premise is anchored in the official Christian belief in the essential blindness of the Jew. In effect, the "lack" that makes converts blind to Tontonello's marvels is tied to the historical failure of the Jewish people "to see" or recognize Christ in the person of Jesus, which is their capital sin according to the Christian account. As Albert Sicroff observes in his discussion of Diego de Simancas's *Defensio Statuti Toletani* (1575):

La negativa a reconocer al Mesías en la persona de Jesucristo representaba naturalmente a los ojos de Simancas, como a los de tantos otros escritores cristianos, el pecado capital de los judíos. Tanto a Su nacimiento como a Su muerte, todos los elementos de la Naturaleza reconocieron a su Creador. El cielo envió una estrella, el mar le dejó caminar sobre sus aguas, y mientras él agonizaba en la Cruz, la tierra tembló, el sol ocultó sus rayos, las rocas y los muros se hendieron. ¡Mas los judíos permanecieron en su ceguera! [...] Así, concluye Simancas, por sus numerosos pecados, los judíos sufrieron las maldiciones que Moisés les había predicho, incluida la de la ceguera. (*Los estatutos* 195)

Once they have accepted the rules of the game, the spectators must play along even as they see nothing, if only because the truth would jeopardize their social identity. Let us recall

Benito's aside: "yo no veo; pero al fin habré de decir que lo veo, por la negra honrilla" (229). We can read these words as a reminder of the pressures of ideology, and also as an illustration of the "externality of belief." Benito and the rest of the spectators of *El retablo* are not suffering from any kind of mass delusion. On the contrary, they know very well what they are doing, but they do it anyway. As Žižek ("How Did Marx?") writes in his discussion of Sloterdijk's theory of ideology, "they know that in their activity, they are following an illusion, but still, they are doing it. [...] The lesson to be drawn from this concerning the social field is above all that belief, far from being an 'intimate,' purely mental state, is always materialized in our effective social activity" (316).

Of course, the pressures of ideology are effective only if there is something in it for us. Those who do not know the rules of the game—or have nothing to gain or lose from playing it—see only maddening non-sense behind the ideological illusion. The late appearance of an army captain illustrates this point in Cervantes's interlude. Since the *furrier* knows nothing about the properties, premises, and conditions of Tontonello's tableau, he sees only madness and confusion: "¿Está loca esta gente? ¿Qué diablos de doncella es ésta, y qué baile, y qué Tontonello?" (235). This is the structural moment in which *El retablo* departs from all similar tales associated with the invisible magic cloth or painting, including Don Juan Manuel's medieval version as well as Andersen's more recent re-elaboration of the story in *The Emperor's New Clothes* (see Molho, *Cervantes*). While all other variants conclude with the general acceptance of the truth (a collective recognition that the king is naked, for example), what happens in Cervantes's interlude is much more interesting from the standpoint of the theory of ideology. Here, the truthful statements of the *furrier* are simply incorporated into the logic of the interactive performance, as we can see in the exchange between the villagers and the army captain:

Capacho:	¿Luego no vee la doncella herodiana el señor Furrier?
Furrier:	¿Qué diablos de doncella tengo que ver?

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Capacho: Basta: de ex il[l]is es.
Gobernador: De ex il[l]is es, de ex il[l]is es.
Juan: Dellos es, dellos el señor Furrier;
dellos es.
Furrier: ¡Soy de la mala puta que los
parió; y, por Dios vivo, que, si
echo mano a la espada, que los
haga salir por las ventanas, que no
por la puerta!
Capacho: Basta: de ellos es, pues no vee
nada.
Furrier: ¡Canalla barretina!: si otra vez me
dicen que soy dellos, no les dejaré
hueso sano! (235)

The *furrier*'s revelation of the truth about the performance (that there is nothing to see) does not dissolve the illusion. On the contrary, the power of the magic tableau is reinforced by the statements of the *furrier* insofar as they are interpreted as confirmation of one of its premises: that the Jews are blind. We could say that the villagers "choose to interpret" the words of the *furrier* as confirmation of his Jewish heritage rather than as proof of the fact that Tontonello's tableau is a sham because they feel they can gain something from such interpretation. The fantastic show allows them to reanchor their social identity, and it might also drive the army captain out of town. This collective wish is expressed by Juan when he urges Chanfalla to continue the interrupted performance: "Por vida del Autor, que haga salir otra vez a la doncella Herodías, porque vea este señor lo que nunca ha visto; quizá con esto le cohecharemos para que se vaya presto del lugar" (234).¹⁵

Faced with the accusations of the commoners, the army captain attempts to reaffirm his social standing by representing (or mis-representing) his accusers as the real Jews: "¡Canalla barretina!" This paradigmatic situation shows that the Christian image of the Jews is nothing but a social fantasy that hides the incongruity of the social field. Molho has made a similar point in his analysis of *El retablo*:

En una mente rural castellana de fines del siglo XVI, o principios del XVII, el judío sólo debía existir como fantasía o negativo fantástico de la propia condición, máscara y signo

de lo que no se es, de lo que cada uno descubre por su misma denegación que lo lleva por dentro como un crimen o castigo encubierto. Proclamar: "No soy judío" es enunciar el terror de serlo, un judaísmo obsesivo y fantástico, risible a proporción de su carácter imaginario e inverosímil. (*Cervantes* 160)

From this perspective, Cervantes's interlude could be read as a powerful critique of anti-Semitism. Žižek ("How Did Marx?") would seem to confirm this interpretation when he maintains that "the proper answer to anti-Semitism is therefore not 'Jews are really not like that' but 'the anti-Semitic idea of Jew has nothing to do with Jews; the ideological figure of the Jew is a way to stitch up the inconsistency of our own ideological system'" (326). In effect, the Jew is presented in *El retablo* as the quintessential "social symptom" of Counter-Reformation Spain and, therefore, as the point of emergence of the truth about the social field: its contingency and violence.

Turning to the problem of the reception of the interlude, we must face a final question concerning the position of the reader. It is not difficult to see that the reader has been located in an oblique position that allows him/her to gaze at the stage and the internal spectators, and to remain on the margins of the interactive performance. While Molho thinks of the army captain as the demystifying character of the interlude because of his nonintegrated position (168), I rather think of the reader as the true "tangential clairvoyant"—to use Molho's expression—of *El retablo*, especially since the *furrier* is also caught—as we have seen—in the ideological trappings of *limpieza*. To be sure, the army captain is indeed the subject of the enunciation of the basic truth about the show (that the stage of the tableau is empty), but he is not in a position to tie the conditions and premises of the performance to the social conventions on which it rests. It is ultimately up to the readers of *El retablo* to make the connection between the empty stage of the magic tableau and the social stage in which they too have to act as if they see the marvels of ideology.

In closing, the perspectivistic drive of *El retablo de las maravillas* may once again be connected with the curious perspective—especially with Žižek's understanding of

Chapter Six

anamorphosis as a valuable tool for the critique of ideology. Cervantes's provocative interlude creates an anamorphic specular image of the social field of Counter-Reformation Spain that reveals the ridiculous and, at the same time, dark truth behind one of its central foundational myths: the belief in the essential superiority of Christian genealogy. The final brawl involving the army captain and the villagers underscores this tragicomic aspect of the notion of *limpieza*.

Conclusion

[L]a virtud del Retablo
se queda en su punto.

Cervantes
El retablo de las maravillas

I

Molho has suggested that one of the defining characteristics of the Cervantine text is the presence of “tangential clairvoyants” (“clarividentes tangenciales”) who reveal the fragility of conventional wisdom from nonintegrated positions (*Cervantes* 168). We can think of a host of Cervantine characters that illustrate Molho’s notion, including the *furrier* of *El retablo de las maravillas*, Tomás Rodaja in *El licenciado Vidriera*, Cipión and Berganza in *El coloquio de los perros*, and several characters in *Don Quixote*. On the other hand, as I hope to have shown in part 1, picaresque characters such as Lázaro and Justina may also be described as “tangential clairvoyants” with regard to the premises and principles of the social field. Their “way of seeing” (“modo de ver,” as Justina says) reveals—in the words of Lázaro—“notorious things that have never been seen” (91; my translation).

Thus, in my discussion of early picaresque narratives, I arrived at the conclusion that *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *La pícara Justina* may be read as anamorphic texts that reveal the dark side of the social field from the marginal position inhabited by the *pícaro/a*. Similarly, I read *Don Quixote*, *Persiles*, and *El retablo de las maravillas* as anamorphic works that

incorporate or produce oblique perspectives of Counter-Reformation culture. However, while in my exploration of the picaresque I look to redefine the position of the subject/s of the enunciation, my study of Cervantine narrative and theater focuses mainly on the position of the reader.

To put it plainly, in my analysis of *Lazarillo* and *La pícara*, I connect the presence of an oblique gaze with the “subjective” viewpoints of the characters Lázaro and Justina. By contrast, in my re-examination of *Don Quixote*, *Persiles*, and *El retablo de las maravillas*, among other Cervantine texts, I argue that one of the central aspects of the Cervantine literary artifice is an explicit attempt to incorporate the reader into the fictional world of the text. My claim is that the Cervantine reader (“lector mío”) is “constructed” as an inside/outside observer who may be identified as the true beholder of the oblique gaze. Thus, my interpretation of the scopic structure of the Cervantine text differs from that of Molho, for example, in that he identifies the position of the demystifying “tangential clairvoyant” with specific characters (the *furrier*, Sancho, Tomás Rodaja, and so on), while in my mind, such a position is meant to be inhabited by the reader herself.

As I explained in the section on *Don Quixote*, we cannot trust the view of any particular character—at least not for long. At first, Sancho’s “down-to-earth” view seems more consistent with “reality” than that of Don Quixote (in the episode of the windmills, for example), but then we realize that there are certain blind spots in Sancho’s gaze as well. With regard to Don Quixote, we seem to oscillate between the need to laugh at his antics and an uncanny feeling of sympathy, perhaps even a secret identification with the “mad” view of the knight-errant. In *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, Cervantes creates an extraordinary distance between us and the circumstances of the story. Hence, readers cannot truly identify with any of the characters. The most interesting case from the point of view of the position of the reader is perhaps *El retablo de las maravillas*. In essence, I do not think that *El retablo* promotes an identification with the viewpoint of the army captain—as Molho would have it. Rather, I believe that Cervantes’s interlude invites readers to transcend such a position in order to make the connection between the interactive performance of the

magic tableau and the social stage on which they too are called upon to perform certain rituals of self-affirmation.

II

As I said at the beginning, my research draws heavily on Maravall's conceptualization of the baroque as a period marked by the presence of a "guided culture" that may be connected with institutional drives to secure the system of authority of the absolutist monarchy and the privileged positions of the nobility and the Church. This does not mean that all cultural manifestations of the baroque period may be defined as forms of cultural guidance. On the contrary, as I have tried to show here, there are plenty of literary, artistic, and theatrical works that question (even oppose) officially propagated values and beliefs as well as the mechanisms of their transmission. While Maravall fixes on questions related to the deployment of culture for indoctrinating or "guiding" purposes in *La cultura del barroco*, he certainly recognizes the appearance of oppositional social movements and contestatory literary and artistic manifestations all throughout the early modern period. He insists on this aspect when he writes in *La cultura del barroco*: "esto no quiere decir que no se produzcan casos, y aun muy frecuentes, de repulsa de lo que se propone. Y ahí está todo ese fondo conflictivo y de oposición en el siglo XVII sin tener presente el cual —también en esto hay que insistir— no se puede entender nada" (198).¹

Much of today's Golden Age scholarship has as its ultimate goal the location of "oppositional voices" in the midst of the nation-building impulse of imperial and Counter-Reformation Spain. The idea is that "pockets of resistance" would appear in the ruptures between competing discourses or contradictory discursive tendencies. Such conviction has led to "revolutionary" readings of key literary figures of the 1600s: I am thinking of George Mariscal's reinterpretation of the work of Francisco de Quevedo in *Contradictory Subjects* (1991) as well as the controversies generated by Paul Julian Smith's re-reading of Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* in *Writing in the Margin* (1988). While discursive contradictions can make it possible for nuclei of resistance or contestation to emerge,

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contradictory subject positions do not necessarily lead to a questioning of the principles on which power relations rest. Thus, I believe Joan Copjec is right when she argues that

while it seems logical to expect that the different subject positions one is summoned to occupy would come into conflict with each other [...] one might simultaneously hold two contradictory positions [...] one might hold to one term and repress its contrary [...] a society could be founded on a non recognition of the contradictions it contains. (154)

The well-known patterns of the commodity aesthetics industry seem to confirm Copjec's argument. Many of the advertisements that saturate the US media, for example, draw explicit connections between acquisitive power and constitutional rights. A current commercial for Burger King tells TV audiences, against a backdrop of the Statue of Liberty, that since they are Americans they "have the right to get a Whopper for \$.99 cents." The segment concludes with the remark: "it's all there in the Constitution, look it up!" An American Express commercial tells viewers that a credit card does not make better people and then shows some of the products one may be able to purchase with it, only to conclude, "well, maybe it will make you better." Even more significantly, a local radio segment sponsored by a computer company announces that "the price of freedom has been reduced," since portable computers are now more affordable. These advertisements suggest that the possession of money is a precondition for the enjoyment of the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Although advertising frequently toys with the contradictions of the capitalist system, it seems safe to assume that these products of the commodity aesthetics industry reify the values of late-capitalist societies.

In my discussion of anamorphic literature in early modern Spain, I distinguish those works that toy with the contradictions of the field of identities but ultimately uphold its central principles, from those that do indeed question or undermine the established system of beliefs. I have tried to demonstrate that Alemán's novel incorporates two different worldviews (the perspective of the *pícaro* vs. that of the preacher or "atalaya de la vida humana"), only to reinforce the watchtower's view, which is consistent with dominant values and beliefs. On the other

hand, I argue that the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes*, López de Úbeda's *La pícaro Justina*, and the work of Cervantes realize the critical potential of the anamorphic form. Thus, my thesis involves three complementary lines of argumentation: (1) The hysteric discourses of Lázaro and Justina call attention to the hypocrisy of the social field and the arbitrariness of its system of authority; (2) The so-called archetype of the picaresque genre—Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache*—simultaneously shows and hides the contradictions of the social order in a discursive style that can be connected with the indoctrinating tendencies of Counter-Reformation ideology; and (3) *Don Quixote*, *Persiles*, and much of Cervantes's theater invite the reader to question the cultural assumptions that structure his or her perception of the world.

III

Finally, I would like to contextualize some of the central findings of this study in light of the ongoing discussions concerning the function of the critic in contemporary societies. One of the essential aspects of ideology is its tendency to manufacture scapegoats as a way of covering up the inconsistencies of social formations. One need only think of the cathartic function that the figure of the Jew played in Nazi Germany. We may also recall Western Cold War images of the Communist. Ideological practices secure nations by constructing and/or rearticulating myths of "always already national collectivities" and by "exteriorizing" contingency and social antagonism—the living proof of the arbitrariness of the myth. In the same way that the detective's discovery of the real murderer guarantees the innocence of the rest of the characters in the classic detective novel, the "discovery" of the "real enemy"—the Jew, the Communist, the homosexual, and so on—makes it possible for the dominant social groups and the established system of values and authority to be discharged of guilt. A recent example may be the Oklahoma City bombing. Minutes after the explosion, experts in international terrorism were urged to isolate the blame. They wasted no time in manufacturing a solid scapegoat: the Islamic fanatic. A few hours later, the country

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was shocked by the preliminary results of the criminal investigation as evidence pointed unequivocally toward white American nationalists. Clearly, the tragic dimension of the Oklahoma City bombing was intensified by the failure of the Arab plot theory, that is, by the impossibility of proving the guilt of the designated murderer that would have offered a cathartic remedy for the nation's crisis. By resisting symbolization, the "attack in America's heartland" became a traumatic stain and a reminder of the contradictions inherent to "the American identity."

While the nation-building practices of imperial Spain create the myth of "an always already Spanish Christian" and produce fantastic scapegoats—the Jew, the Moor, the *pícaro*—to cover up the incongruities of the social order, the hysteric discourses of Lázaro and Justina return the blame to the master and his faulty laws and values. If *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *La pícara Justina* represent "the discourse of the hysteric"—i.e., the discourse of subjectivity according to Lacan—Cervantes's revelations regarding the non-sensical nature of honor and *limpieza* and his critique of the social practices of transmission of authority may be related to what Lacan calls "the discourse of the analyst." Mark Bracher describes the ideal position of the cultural analyst as follows:

Operating from the position of an analyst with regard to culture means reading the various, mutually disjoint and even contradictory discourses of a culture in order to reveal the *a*, unconscious fantasy, cause of desire, which operates from behind the facade of the master signifiers and the entire signifying apparatus. By exposing the real that the system of signifiers, and particularly the master signifiers, fail to grasp, one can interpellate subjects to an activation of their alienated condition, their nonidentity with their master signifiers. ("On the Psychological" 126)

Cervantes's drive to account for the element excluded from symbolization may be said to anticipate the analyst's aim to expose the "real" that lies behind the facade of the master signifiers. This connection between the experimental writings of Cervantes and the methods and objectives of the analyst has

been noted by, among others, de Armas Wilson, who focuses on the author's understanding of dream interpretation and his vision of the reader ("lector mío") as "oneiromancer":

Cervantes builds a specific role for his reader into his work: the role of oneiromancer. Instead of providing meaning by way of the stability of the interpretative position, however, Cervantes focuses on the meaning of the interpretative position itself [...] introduces the desire to give meaning to dreams rather than to find it there. Thus, dream interpretation—the paradigm in Cervantes for all interpretation—is made endlessly renewable. ("Cervantes and the Night Visitors" 79–80)

The ultimate aim of psychoanalytic criticism as defined by Lacanian theorists—among others, Slavoj Žižek, Joan Copjec, Mladen Dolar, and Mark Bracher—is to reveal the incongruity of the fantasy objects that constitute the ontological support of the symbolic order (see especially Bracher's *Lacan, Discourse and Social Change: A Psychoanalytic Cultural Criticism*). I argue that this is precisely the effect produced by much of Cervantes's literary and theatrical production. The anamorphic artifices constructed by Cervantes tell an untold story about dominant modes of representation—literary and otherwise. Texts such as *El trato de Argel*, *La gran sultana*, and *El retablo de las maravillas* reveal the incongruity of honor and *limpieza*, as well as the arbitrariness of the Christian belief in the threatening otherness of *conversos* and *moriscos*, through the incorporation of marginal or oblique perspectives that compensate for the ideological distortion. While the official values of honor and *limpieza* work to ensure the success of the call that names the "Spanish subject" by transforming contingency into necessity, i.e., by filling in the lack in the symbolic order, Cervantine discourse shows the place of the crack.

Cascardi's reading of Cervantes emphasizes his insistence on the role played by desire in the construction of history and his critique of those models of interpretation that aim to "discover" what actually happened the way it really was: "the Cervantine understanding of our relationship to history as mediated by desire is directed against those modes of reading that would attempt to negate the power of desire through the

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promise of a direct or unmediated relationship with the past” (“The Archeology” 49). Cervantes’s understanding of the always mediated nature of our relationship with the past, along with his commitment to challenge “conventional worldviews,” situates him as close as one can be to the ideal position of the cultural analyst. In the end, we could say that Cervantes, like the Arabic author of *Don Quixote*, invites the reader to make his/her own mark in the narrative: “Tu lector, pues eres prudente, juzga lo que te pareciere, que yo no debo ni puedo más” (208).

Illustrations



Illustration 1. *Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve* (“*The Ambassadors*”), by Hans Holbein the Younger (1533), oil on oak, 207 x 209.5 cm. © National Gallery, London.



Illustration 2. A detail from *Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve* ("The Ambassadors"), by Hans Holbein the Younger (1533), oil on oak.
© National Gallery, London.

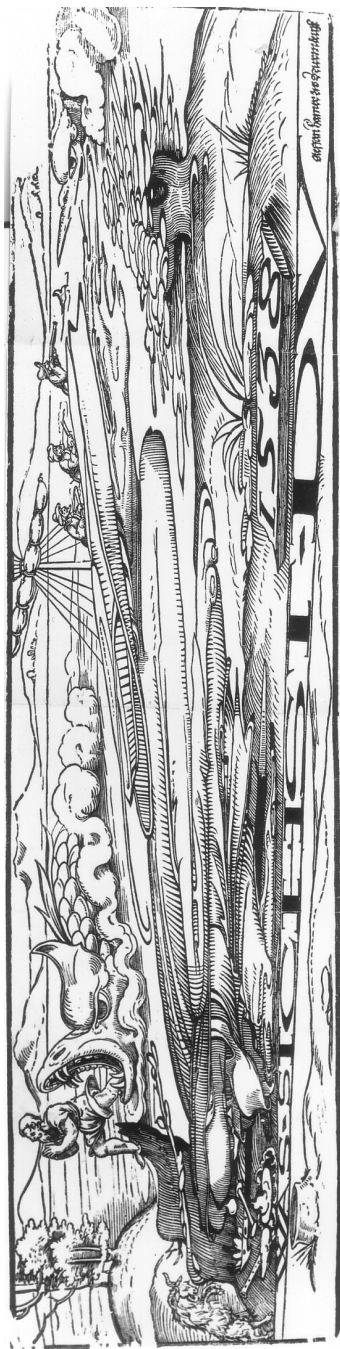


Illustration 3. *Was siehst du?* (What do you see?), by Erhard Schön (1538). Woodcut. Albertina, Wien.



Illustration 4. *Aus, du alter Tor!* (Out, you old fool!), by Erhard Schön (1538). Woodcut. Albertina, Wien.



Illustration 5. *Las Meninas*, by Diego Velázquez (1656), oil on canvas, 10 feet 5 inches x 9 feet 2 inches. All rights reserved © Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

Notes

Introduction

1. Nicolás mentions a couple of other allusions by Mireille Calle-Gruber and Luisa López-Grigera (22).

2. All quotes from *Teoría del saber histórico* are from the 1967 edition. Maravall's argument here has much in common with Walter Benjamin's critique of the objectivist's aim to reconstruct the past the way it really was: "Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. A historian that takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one" (Benjamin 263).

3. According to Lacanian semiotics, the meaning of a signifier is retroactively fixated by means of a nodal rigid designator, i.e., an anchoring point ("point *de capiton*"), a surplus-signifier without signified that—as Žižek says—"totalizes an ideology by bringing to a halt the metonymic sliding of its signified" (*The Sublime* 99). The concept "anchoring point" appears in Lacan's "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious of Reason since Freud" (*Écrits* 154) as a translation of his earlier notion of "quilting point." This is Lacan's original formulation of the "quilting point" in book 3 of his seminar on psychoses: "Everything radiates out from and is organized around this signifier, similar to these little lines of force that an upholstery button forms on the surface of material. It's the point of convergence that enables everything that happens in this discourse to be situated retroactively and prospectively" (*The Seminar* 268).

4. See Giménez Caballero 10–64.

5. See Castro's *De la edad conflictiva*.

6. See Maravall (*Estado moderno* 1: 306). See also Maravall's *La cultura del barroco*. George Mariscal has recently cautioned against Maravall's alleged determinism: "I have already stated my reservations about a theoretical model that reduces the subject to an embodiment of ideological effects. Subjectivity may be socially constructed, but this is not to say that human beings are incapable of resisting or investing in any given set of positions. A concept of the dominant which is as totalizing as it comes to be in Maravall's *Cultura del Barroco*, for example, leads to problems reminiscent of those surrounding Louis Althusser's *Trager* (subjects as systemic supports), not the least of which has to do with the potential for oppositional movements and social change" (21). Mariscal's objection may result from a common misconception of Maravall's object of study in *La cultura del barroco*. We should note that Maravall is not talking about "a subject saturated by ideology," i.e., a subject positively filled out by ideology in the field of material life

(that would be Althusser); rather, he is referring to specific forms of cultural representation that portray submission to the system of public authority as a religious duty. While Mariscal is correct in noticing that the limit of these representations is not always present in Maravall's account of baroque culture in *La cultura del barroco*, this is not due to a deterministic understanding of subjectivity. Mariscal himself notices that Maravall refuses to accept the possibility of any "total system" and that he deals with manifestations of political, social, and cultural opposition elsewhere—see Maravall's *La oposición política bajo los Austrias*, for example. Mariscal comments: "Elsewhere, it should be noted, Maravall sensed the impossibility of any 'total system' and reminded us that in seventeenth-century Spain, 'we are faced with a society energized in its traditional elements, but in new circumstances [...] Now, the restored tradition is more or less debated, or at least it is not exempt from questioning' [...] It is this suggestive thesis that continues to make Maravall's work central to any de-aestheticizing approach to early modern Spanish culture" (21).

7. In his reading of *Don Quixote* as a perspectivistic narrative, Durán draws from Leo Spitzer and especially from Jean Cassou, as we can see in the following remarks: "Jean Cassou, entre otros, ha subrayado la importancia del perspectivismo en la totalidad de la obra y la ha relacionado con la ambigüedad, complicación y multiplicación de puntos de vista de la época renacentista" (185).

8. As Durán eloquently puts it in the following passage: "Entre las estructuras teológico-poéticas de la *Divina Comedia*, y la visión de Santo Tomás, por una parte, y, en el otro lado, las construcciones sistemáticas de un Descartes y un poco más tarde un Newton, se extiende una vasta zona histórica en que la multiplicidad de las visiones, la proliferación de los puntos de vista, crean la confusión y la inquietud. El Renacimiento, y con él Cervantes, se desarrolla dentro de esa zona de inseguridad" (15).

9. See, for example, Erwin Panofsky and Martin Jay. Jay associates the single-point perspective with Cartesian epistemology and the appearance of a modern conception of the world as a mathematically readable space filled with "objects that could only be observed from without by the dispassionate eye of the neutral researcher" (182). Through the mastering of the technique known as the Albertian perspective, a Renaissance painter could potentially produce "an open window to the world." However, the total illusion of reality conveyed by the single-point perspective depends on the location of the viewer at a determined position and distance from the painting, a locus that can only be occupied by one spectator at a time. Thus, as Ernest Gilman says, "should he [the spectator] shift his place (or even look through *both* eyes) the world so carefully constructed for his benefit goes awry" (31).

10. For more bibliographical information on anamorphosis—original sources as well as contemporary studies—see Alberto Pérez Gómez and Louise Pelletier, *Anamorphosis: An Annotated Bibliography*.

11. Percy Schramm documents that the royal seal, which by the time of Philip II had replaced the crown as the true symbol of royalty, was transported in a covered ark accompanied by the pageantry usually devoted to the person of the king (76–77).

12. Peter Barber argues that in England, “cartography came most characteristically to be utilized, in a symbolic manner, in the creation of a personal imperial imagery that was particularly associated with the Queen herself though it derived from the imagery associated with Charles V” (77). Barber also notices that maps and globes appear frequently in Her Majesty’s portraits, so that the Queen and the English Empire conflate at this time when mapping regains an allegorical character (77–78). For an enlightening overview of some of the controversies surrounding the production and use of maps in England in connection with monarchist propaganda, see Richard Helgerson’s essay “The Land Speaks: Cartography, Chorography, and Subversion in Renaissance England.” For more on these issues, see Castillo and Egginton.

13. J. H. Glaser’s extraordinary engraving is clearly reminiscent of several of Dalí’s paintings, most notably his 1938 *Apparition of Face and Fruit Dish on a Beach*.

14. For a detailed account of the “rediscovery” of the grotesque during the early Renaissance, see Sullivan’s *Grotesque Purgatory*, especially 60–63. While Sullivan emphasizes the differences between the carnivalesque and what he terms “the grotesque mode” in his effort to explain the stylistic specificities of *Don Quixote*, part 2, many of the early anamorphoses incorporate and combine elements from both these traditions.

Part 1: The Picaresque

Chapter One

Putting Things in Anamorphic Perspective: The Case of *Lazarillo*

1. Rico insists in this aspect of the narrative when he says: “La pluralidad de significados, la ambigüedad y la ironía me parecen tan constitutivas al *Lazarillo*, que sólo me las explico como hijuelas de un amplio escepticismo (de tejas abajo, si no de tejas arriba) sobre las posibilidades humanas de conocer la realidad (de ‘saber la verdad segura, y presto,’ dirá Cervantes, inteligencia afín si la hubo —entendiendo— a nuestro anónimo)” (53–54). This interpretation of *Lazarillo de Tormes* has much in common with Durán’s understanding of the function of ambiguity in *Don Quixote*, which may explain why Rico draws a connection between Lázaro’s skepticism and Cervantes’s tendency to problematize the notions of reality and truth.

2. According to Thomas Aquinas, “those who excel in intelligence, are naturally rulers; whereas those who are less intelligent, but strong in body, seem made by nature for service” (206). See also chapter 78, “That

by means of intellectual creatures, other creatures are ruled by God”; chapter 79, “That the lower intellectual substances are ruled by the higher”; chapter 81, “Of the ordering of men among themselves and to other things”; and chapter 82, “That the inferior bodies are ruled by God by means of the heavenly bodies.”

3. See Castro’s *El pensamiento de Cervantes* (234), and *Hacia Cervantes* (148–49). In his classic study “El antihéroe y su actitud vital (sentido de la novela picaresca)” (1950), Frutos Gómez connects the picaresque novel with Humanist reform—the work of Erasmus, in particular. In his view, the *pícaro*’s cynicism is a response against a society that reduces him to the status of an outcast. In *Erasme et l’Espagne*, Marcel Bataillon argues against the presence of Erasmian thought in *Lazarillo* insofar as its anticlericalism does not seem to uphold a positive doctrine (652–53). By contrast, both Manuel Asensio (“La intención religiosa”) and Alexander Parker draw a line of contact between *Lazarillo de Tormes* and Erasmian humanism. For a discussion on the changing notion of the poor in connection with the advent of humanism and its new conception of the state, see Maravall’s *La picaresca desde la historia social* (88–89).

4. All references to *Lazarillo* are from Rikapito’s edition unless otherwise indicated. Herrero’s essay (“Renaissance Poverty and *Lazarillo*’s Family”) should help to dispel the notion that “*Lazarillo* makes us stare at rather than raises the issue of poverty” (Dunn 295). Peter Dunn emphasizes the central role of socioeconomic issues in the picaresque: “I find no sign there [in *Lazarillo*] that poverty is made an issue. Rather, in its various manifestations, poverty is the ground from which the protagonist, his need to keep moving, and his urge to achieve independence have sprung. In spite of what many other readers have written, I cannot see this representation of poverty as being ideologically conceived” (295). For a discussion of the question of poverty in *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán*, see Castillo and Spadaccini.

5. Maravall touches upon this aspect of Augustinian philosophy in *El mundo social de “La Celestina,”* where he distances Fernando de Rojas’s dynamic notions about society from the traditional Scholastic conception of the world: “Para San Agustín, ese eslabón que aparentemente falta, ocasionando un salto en la cadena de las causas, está en su puesto, aunque no acertemos a verlo: ‘lo que llamamos fortuito no es más que aquello cuya razón y causa se ocultan a nuestra vista.’ Ciertos hechos nos son imprevisibles y como fuera de serie; pero no por eso podemos dar por sentada ‘la interferencia de una fuerza cósmica, arbitraria y errática.’ Ese aparente azar, ‘en realidad, como manifestación de la divina providencia, constituye una parte esencial de la necesidad de las cosas’ [...] en la baja Edad Media, la creencia en ese orden empieza a resquebrajarse” (135–36).

6. “En una naturaleza desdivinizada, el hombre tiene que obrar por sí mismo, sirviéndose de las fuerzas que la naturaleza le presta para domi-

nar las potencias ciegas del mundo natural, que constituyen el dominio de la fortuna” (Maravall, *El mundo* 144).

7. “Del desarrollo del dinero como medio de cálculo económico y medio de pago y atesoramiento, venían causándose, en gran parte, las transformaciones sociales de la época. La economía monetaria trajo como consecuencia la conmutación de los tributos en especie y de los servicios personales por pagos en dinero. Y esto ocasionó una mecanización de las relaciones y, como consecuencia, un distanciamiento recíproco de los individuos” (Maravall, *El mundo* 69–70). In volume 1 of *Estado moderno y mentalidad social*, Maravall links the increase in the use of money to the appearance of a perspective conception of space and a mechanical conception of time. These are some of the changes which—according to Maravall—made it possible for the modern state to emerge as a historical entity (33–86).

8. The idea that *Lazarillo* constitutes a perspective artifice in writing has been around for some time. In his article “La picardía original de la novela picaresca,” Ortega y Gasset refers to the picaresque as a narrative genre that contemplates life “from the bottom” (“desde abajo”). In his *La novela picaresca y el punto de vista*, Rico has stated that the most definite feature of the picaresque is its depiction of the world from a specific point of view; a point that appears as a structural correlate of Claudio Guillén’s notion of the “subjective I” (“yo subjetivo”) as developed in his doctoral dissertation “Anatomies of Roguery” (1953), and later in his essay “Towards a Definition of the Picaresque.”

9. The secularization of space in *Lazarillo de Tormes* may be said to be accompanied by the emergence of a secular notion of time. Maravall links the appearance of this modern notion of time in the literature of the late fifteenth century (*La Celestina*, in particular) to a mechanistic conception of the world: “Son frecuentes, desde fines del XV, las imágenes de tipo mecanicista para dar cuenta del movimiento del mundo. Este es como una noria, dirá Pleberio (pág 175). Unos años antes de *La Celestina*, Juan de Lucena se servirá de la imagen del reloj: ‘el mundo, por cierto artificio como el reloj, sin más tocarlo, se rota.’ Y recordemos que, según Dilthey, la imagen del universo como un reloj es reveladora del pensamiento naturalista y mecanicista que se va desarrollando e imponiendo en las mentes del Renacimiento” (Maravall, *El mundo* 142–43).

10. Others have commented on Cervantes’s dialogue with *Lazarillo de Tormes* and the picaresque genre along similar lines, most recently Spadaccini and Talens and Hans Gumbrecht (“Cosmological Time”).

11. In chapter 2 we will see how Parker not only notices the presence of this temporal rupture in *Guzmán de Alfarache*, but also reads it—much as I do—as the sign of the division of the subject, i.e., the split of the “narrative I” into two separate and competing voices.

12. In his introduction to *La vie de Lazarillo de Tormès* (1958), Bataillon argues against the tendency to consider *Lazarillo de Tormes* a

picaresque novel (77). However, Sobejano, del Monte, and Rico, among others, maintain that *Lazarillo* belongs to the picaresque genre, either as “a first step” (Sobejano) or as the genre’s “archetype” (del Monte). For Parker, *Lazarillo* should be considered a predecessor of the picaresque genre: “Aunque en general se le suele considerar como el prototipo de la novela picaresca, en realidad es tan sólo una precursora” (39). Guillén documented the circumstances surrounding the invention of the picaresque genre in the early 1600s in his classic essay “Luís Sánchez, Ginés de Pasamonte y los inventores del género picaresco” (1966). While acknowledging the fundamental differences between *Lazarillo de Tormes* and the best-sellers of the 1600s, especially Alemán’s *Guzmán de Alfarache* and Quevedo’s *El Buscón*, I find it useful to refer to all of them as picaresque narratives for comparative purposes.

13. A number of critics have turned toward the prologue of *Lazarillo* in search of answers to the questions raised by the narrative. In his article “Sobre el estilo del *Lazarillo*” (1957), Sicroff says that the prologue of *Lazarillo* must be seen as a fundamental part of the narrative since it is there that “the narrative ‘I’ [yo], the point from which the truth of the narrative is suspended, manifests itself” (157–70). This is also the contention of Ricapito, for whom the prologue is the place where the narrator reveals “el porqué de su vida y además de la razón de ser de la obra” (ed. of *Lazarillo* 63).

14. In this passage, I follow Valbuena Prat’s edition *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* in his compilation *La novela picaresca española*. In Ricapito’s edition there is a comma between “rico” and “si,” which may lead to an entirely different reading of the closing lines of the passage: “Suplico a Vuestra Merced reciba el pobre servicio de mano de quien lo hiciera más rico, si su poder y deseo se conformaran” (95). Ricapito maintains a reading according to which the subjunctive “se conformaran” refers not to Lázaro in his function of narrator—the narrator’s hand—but to “Vuestra Merced.” The editor provides an interesting clue as to the sign of his reading in note 17 in which he postulates: “Se conformaran [a recibirlo],” “dispuestos a recibirlo.” Thus, Ricapito reads something like this: “I beg Your Excellency to receive this poor service from the hand of whom would have made it richer, that is, if the power and desire of Your Excellency are inclined to accept it.” This reading alienates Lázaro from his desire. By contrast, if we erase Ricapito’s comma, the text becomes saturated with the narrator’s desire: “I beg Your Excellency to receive this poor service from the hand of whom would have made it richer if his desire and power were to conform.” This second reading emphasizes the gap between the infinity of the narrator’s desire and his limited power. The comma in question also appears in Rico’s edition; yet, Rico’s reading of “se conformaran” coincides with mine: “estuvieran de acuerdo, se correspondiesen” (ed. Rico 10n21). Rico supports his interpretation with a quote from Avellaneda’s *Quijote*

that illustrates this use of the verb *conformar* in the literature of the Golden Age: “quien tan buenas palabras tiene, con las cuales es cierto conformarán las obras” (10).

15. This idea may be connected with Lacan’s comments on anamorphosis in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Lacan’s reflections focus precisely on the subject’s division, which, in his view, is made visible in anamorphosis: “I see only from one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides” (72). In this sense, the narrative of Lázaro de Tormes would resemble the “discourse of the hysteric.” According to Bracher (“On the Psychological”), hysteric discourse can be defined “as a failure of the subject to coincide with or be satisfied by the master signifiers offered by society and embraced as the subject’s ideals” (122). The discourse of the hysteric “takes its name from the fact that its most striking instance is hysterical neurosis, whose physical symptoms manifest in the most striking way possible the subject’s refusal to embody—literally to give its body over to—the master signifiers that constitute the subject positions that society, through language, makes available to individuals. [...] The divided subject, \$, is thus a manifestation of the alienation that occurs as a result of the subject’s accession to language—an alienation that is suppressed in the discourses of the Master and of the University [the discourse of cultural authority], but which gains expression and dominance in the discourse of the Hysteric” (122).

16. Parker notes that the word *pícaro* is “first documented in 1525 with the sense of ‘kitchen boy,’ but twenty years later it already meant ‘evil living.’ The first dictionary of the Spanish Academy in 1726, which reflects the usage of the seventeenth century, defines *pícaro* as ‘low, vicious, deceitful, dishonourable and shameless’” (4).

17. This doesn’t mean that the *pícaro*’s liminal position may be seen as a result of a free choice, as Dunn implies: “Those that live in a state of permanent liminality [he borrows this concept from Victor Turner’s articulation of the notion proposed by Arnold van Gennep in *Rites de passage*] are all who choose to occupy a place apart in observance of other rules and alternative lifestyles” (309).

18. One can see here, once again, a connection between *Lazarillo* and Erasmian humanism: “La verdadera honra es ser alabado y honrado” (Erasmus, *Enquiridión*; qtd. in *Lazarillo de Tormes* by ed. Ricapito 159n55).

19. Others have related Lázaro’s exposure of the non-sense of honor with his critique of the field of identities of imperial Spain. While Fernando Lázaro Carreter points out that *Lazarillo de Tormes* uncovers the falsity that lies behind the concept of honor, Stephen Gilman insists that Lázaro’s refusal to accept honor’s command needs to be connected to his overall demystification of the values of Christian Spain, i.e., the beliefs that had condemned him to a position of marginality and abjection (149–66).

20. The same goes for Lázaro's reflections on the selling of indulgences: "y dije entre mí: '¡Cuántas destas deben hacer estos burladores [sellers of indulgences] entre la inocente gente!'" (194).

21. See also Frutos Gómez, Asensio ("La intención religiosa"), Herrero ("Renaissance Poverty"), and more recently Maravall (*La picaresca*).

22. In the Lacanian sense "the real" designates, as Allan Sheridan observes, "that which is lacking in the symbolic order, the ineliminable residue of all articulation, the foreclosed element" (in Lacan, *Écrits* x).

Chapter Two

The Gaze of an-Other in *Guzmán de Alfarache*

1. See El Saffar ("The Prodigal" and "The 'I'"). El Saffar follows psychoanalytic theory in connecting the world of the Mother with nature and the body while defining the symbolic order as the world of the Father.

2. See especially book 10 of Augustine's *Confessions*.

3. In the grand theater of the world, where the Author (God) assigns a different role to each of the actors, one's salvation depends on the quality of his/her performance: "en cualquier papel se gana, / que toda la vida humana / representaciones es. / Y la comedia acabada / ha de cenar a mi lado, / el que haya representado, / sin haber errado en nada, / su parte mas acertada" (426–33).

4. There is indeed a remarkable resemblance between Guzmán's denunciation of the *pícaro*'s transgressions and excessive desire, his lessons in morality and Christian resignation, and the teachings of the Spanish and Portuguese Church in both the Old World and the American colonies. Father José de Anchieta puts it perhaps in the clearest terms in his religious play *Na vila de Vitória de S. Mauricio*: "Jesus nos manda ser / sujeitos, e obedecer / como a Deus, a quem governa" (307). Most theologians and missionaries, including some of the most influential religious figures of the Renaissance and baroque periods—among others, Francisco de Vitoria, Manuel de Nóbrega, and Antonio Vieira—offer legitimization and support for the Christian intervention in the American territories on the basis that the Amerindians are incomplete, immature men who need the guidance of reason, i.e., the *jugo da razão*, according to Nóbrega. As the Augustinian Fray Pedro Juárez de Escobar once put it: "All these Indians are like nestlings whose wings have not yet grown enough to allow them to fly themselves" (qtd. in Mc Alister 172).

5. Louise Mirrer shows that the Medieval Castilian epic and ballad represents "other men" (Jews and Muslims) as effeminate and docile men who lack some of the honorable traits of Christians. Mirrer argues that "in stripping Muslims and Jews of their markers of sexual identity the epic and frontier ballad texts displace, rather than signify, these groups' reality, for Muslims and Jews in fact shared the masculinist ideologies of Christians. Thus, the texts must have sought to establish difference by presenting two distinct and contrasting images of men during

the Reconquest—‘manly’ Christians and docile and defeated Muslims and Jews—shoring up Christians’ masculine identity while imaginarily formulating Muslims’ and Jews’ future exclusion from Spain” (181–82). Edward Glaser has examined some of the numerous references to Jews and new Christians in the literature of the Golden Age. According to him, “the copious anti-Semitic literature of the period had created a Jewish stereotype, whose numerous defects included an absolute lack of courage” (qtd. in ed. Brancaforte 305n40). Speaking of the passage of *Guzmán* quoted above, Brancaforte observes that “en la sociedad española, el afeminamiento se identificaba con los judíos [...] dar ‘el nombre de las Pascuas,’ equivale aquí a insultarle y llamarle judío afeminado” (2: 61). My use of the term *excessive enjoyment* is grounded in the Lacanian understanding of racism as a condemnation of the neighbor’s way of experiencing *jouissance*. As Jacques-Alain Miller says: “Racism is founded on what one imagines about the Other’s *jouissance* [he uses the term Other here not in the restricted sense of symbolic order but to refer to any human group that is perceived as essentially different from ‘ours’]; it is hatred of the particular way, of the Other’s own way, of experiencing *jouissance*. We may well think that racism exists because our Islamic neighbor is too noisy when he has parties. However, what is really at stake is that he takes his *jouissance* in a way different from ours. Thus, the Other’s proximity exacerbates racism: as soon as there is closeness, there is a confrontation of incompatible modes of *jouissance*. For it is simple to love one’s neighbor when he is distant, but it is a different matter in proximity. Racist stories are always about the way in which the Other obtains a *plus-de-jour*: either he does not work or he does not work enough [or he works too much as in today’s Western image of the Japanese], or he is useless or a little too useful, but whatever the case may be, he is always endowed with a part of *jouissance* that he does not deserve. Thus true intolerance is the intolerance of the Other’s *jouissance*” (79–80). For more on the notion of *excessive enjoyment*, see chapter 6, “Enjoy Your Nation as Yourself!” of Žižek’s *Tarrying with the Negative*.

6. In his edition of Cervantes’s *Entremeses*, Nicholas Spadaccini notices the case of Benito’s reaction to the fantastic appearance of Herodías in *El retablo de las maravillas*: “Ea, sobrino, ténselas tiesas a esa bellaca jodía. Pero, si ésta es jodía, ¿cómo vee estas maravillas?” (232). Spadaccini suggests the following reading: “*Jodía*: judía; también podría sugerir ‘jodi[d]a,’ lo que sería, probablemente, una alusión maliciosa al adulterio de Herodías con Herodes Antipas, hermano de su ex-esposo Filipo” (232–33).

7. The image of the mirror is a favorite among baroque writers, including some Churchmen such as Antonio Vieira, perhaps the most popular author of sermons in the 1600s. In his “Sermão do demonio mudo,” Vieira encourages the nuns of a Bernardinian convent to replace the mirrors hanging from the walls with images of God, the Virgin Mary,

and the saints (261). Vieira condenses the Other's command in the formula "se deve deixar um espelho, qué é o demonio, por um espelho que é Deus" (264). The mirror prescribed by Vieira, i.e., the mirror of the Father, is ultimately a call to sacrifice one's ideal ego—the place from which the subject sees himself as worthy of love. Vieira shows that he is strikingly aware of this: "...não só sacrifica a vista, senão também os olhos com que se ve" (252).

8. Others have commented on this aspect of Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* and Quevedo's *El Buscón* along very similar lines. See especially Talens, and more recently Friedman ("Trials of Discourse"), and Sánchez and Spadaccini.

Chapter Three

Look Who's Talking! *Justina* and Cultural Authority

1. Justina's narrative voice fits well within Lacan's theorization of "feminine speech" as "not-all in the field of the Other." This notion of "the feminine" corresponds to the "excessive" position of the subject in the symbolic order: "Her being not all in the phallic function does not mean that she is not in it. [...] She is right in it. But there is something more" (Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality* 145). According to Lacan, if "woman" is excluded by the nature of words "it is precisely that in being not all, she has, in relation to what the phallic function designates of *jouissance*, a supplementary *jouissance*" (144). Recently a number of feminist theorists and Golden Age specialists, including Julia Kristeva, Juliet Flower MacCannell, and Ruth El Saffar ("The Prodigal" and "The 'I'"), among others, have proposed a redefinition of feminism as the study of all that has been marginalized, excluded, or suppressed in the-Name-of-the-Father. In her 1995 essay on María de Zayas, Marina Brownlee argues in favor of this notion: "I would suggest the appropriateness of Julia Kristeva's relational definition of feminism, that is, the study of 'that which is marginalized by the patriarchal symbolic order'—a relational feminism which is 'as shifting as the various forms of patriarchy itself, a definition which can argue that men can also be constructed as marginal by the symbolic order'" (119). The object of study of this "relational feminism" is a correlate of the object of psychoanalytic criticism: the "object," i.e., that which has been cast off or stigmatized in the-Name-of-the-Father (Lacan, *Television* 21). The object position of "woman" thus corresponds to the excessive place reserved for other groups in the Father's world. This is not to support the "postmodern" homogenizing impulse that paradoxically justifies itself by weaving the banner of "difference"—what Paul Julian Smith calls in his critique of Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* "the benign relativism which refuses to acknowledge degrees and classes of difference between subjects" (*Representing the Other* 127)—but rather, to propose a conceptual frame within which

to account for each differential mode of alienation in its historical specificity.

2. Bataillon's thesis on *La pícara Justina*, which quickly became a necessary point of reference for contemporary critics, differs radically from the traditional reading exemplified by the 1912 edition of Julio Puyol. Against Puyol's ascription of the text to the friar Andrés Pérez, Bataillon (*Pícaros y picaresca*) maintains the authorship of the doctor Francisco López de Úbeda, who would have created *La pícara* to amuse a selective audience of courtiers, including his patron Don Rodrigo Calderón, a favorite of the duke of Lerma. From Cervantes's burlesque comments against the author of *La pícara Justina* in *Viaje al Parnaso* (see Bataillon 51, 57–59) to Menéndez y Pelayo's introduction to *El Quijote de Avellaneda* (1905), to the histories of Spanish literature, among them Manuel de Montoliú's *Manual de historia de la literatura castellana* (1957), this *Libro de entretenimiento* has been at the receiving end of many negative statements (see ed. Damiani 6).

3. In *Poder, honor y élites en el siglo XVII*, Maravall develops an enlightening argument regarding the changing political and social landscape of the royal court under Philip III and his successors. In his view, the appearance of "power elites" integrated by moneyed groups, professional politicians, and bureaucrats signals the slow but progressive transformation of the statist nobiliary system into a more dynamic yet essentially aristocratic one (173–251).

4. According to Bataillon, "no es posible entender nada de aquella *Pícara* si se supone, como nosotros supusimos por tanto tiempo, que la obra es sólo el retrato más o menos feliz de un tipo real de campesina desenvuelta que bien pudiera haber existido en Mansilla de las Mulas al haberse extendido, hipotéticamente hasta aquel pueblo, la influencia o el contagio de las 'mujeres libres' de la Corte. En realidad, este desconcertante tipo de *pícaro* hembra hay que entenderlo como resultante de un doble disfraz, femenino y picaresco, adoptado por un médico 'chocarrero' o bufón en los palacios de los nobles" (*Pícaros* 185). The topic of the "disguise" also appears in Parker's comments regarding the parodic structure of *La pícara Justina*. In Parker's view, "the disguise" ("el disfraz") constitutes the very organizing principle of this text, which was conceived as a burlesque re-production of the picaresque model of Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* (93–95).

5. Cruz argues this point when she says of *La hija de Celestina*: "narrated in the third person, the novel assumes the pretense of a woman's discourse only when Elena relates her genealogy. Otherwise, her story is told from its inception by a stern moralist who passes swift and certain judgment on his literary creation" ("Sexual Enclosure" 153).

6. There are other passages in which Justina speaks against the cultural tradition that represents women as incomplete beings who need to be protected and guided by men: "varias semejanzas y jeroblíficos

dibujaron los antiguos para por ellos significar qué cosa es la mujer, pero casi en todos iban apuntando cuán natural cosa le es buscar marido para que la apoye, fortalezca, defienda y haga sombra, ca aun pintadas, no nos quieren dejar estar sin hombres” (450).

7. Also the following *aprovechamiento*: “las mujeres libres, aun los nombres de los santos lugares ignoran; tal es el descuido que tienen de las cosas santas” (310).

8. For more on the issue of Justina’s dismembering of Perlícaro and her ridicule of male authority through the juxtaposition of phallic signifiers, see Davis, especially 147–50.

9. Bataillon maintains that the character Perlícaro is a burlesque allusion to a young Francisco de Quevedo, a rising literary star and political rival of López de Úbeda (*Pícaros y picaresca* 32).

Part 2: Cervantes

Chapter Four

Don Quixote: A Case of Anamorphic Literature

1. As James Parr puts it in his well-known book “*Don Quixote*”: *An Anatomy of Subversive Discourse*: “The hierarchy of narrative voices and presences in *Don Quixote*, in approximate descending order of credibility, is as follows: 1) the extra-textual *historical author*, a presence; 2) the inferred author, whose presence derives from a synthesis of all the voices in and of the text—mimetic, diegetic, textual, and extra-fictional; 3) the *dramatized author* of the prologues; 4) the editor persona or *supernarrator*, who assumes obvious control in I, 8; 5) the *fictive historical author* encoded into the text by reference—a presence rather than a voice; 6) the *autonomous narrator* of “The Story of Ill-Advised Curiosity”; 7) the *archival historian* of the first eight chapters; 8) the intrusive translator; 9) that *reductio ad absurdum* of chroniclers, *Cide Hamete*, a presence rather than a voice; 10) the dramatized reader called *second author*, a transitional voice; 11) the *pen*, also a presence” (31).

2. All quotations from Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* are from the 1998 edition of John Jay Allen.

3. In her engaging article “Pictures and Portraits in Literature: Cervantes as the Painter of *Don Quijote*” (1981), Diane Chaffe argues that Cervantes employs “juxtaposition, distortion and exaggeration for comical purposes” (56). Chaffe describes the “baciylmo” as “an equivocal verbal picture” that presents “two distinctive points of view” (50). I believe we could not ask for a better definition of “anamorphic literature.”

4. As Gombrich puts it: “En el momento en que una proyección, una lectura, queda anclada en la imagen frente a nosotros, es mucho más difícil eliminarla. El fenómeno es bien conocido por la lectura de los dibujos-acertijos. Una vez resueltos, se hace difícil, o incluso imposible,

recobrar la impresión que nos producían mientras buscábamos la solución” (199).

5. Agustín Redondo focuses on the effect of folk humor and carnivalesque inversions in *Don Quixote*. He writes: “la visión carnavalesca del mundo se opone a todo lo previsto, lo perfecto, lo duradero; implica, al contrario, lo dinámico, lo cambiante, lo ambivalente. De ahí que la lengua carnavalesca se caracterice por la lógica interna de las cosas ‘al revés’ y ‘contradictorias,’ por las permutaciones entre lo alto y lo bajo, lo noble y lo grotesco” (41).

6. As Chaffe has argued: “In the style of many Renaissance writers, Cervantes exalted Dulcinea’s beauty by comparing it to natural and cosmic phenomena. However, he adopted the painterly devices of caricature, exaggeration, and distortion of colors and forms, to mock the excessive attention paid to feminine pulchritude by such writers” (53).

7. See, for example, El Saffar’s 1993 article “In Marcela’s Case,” in which she reads this episode as a powerful critique of the patriarchal order. For more on this aspect of Cervantes’s writing, see El Saffar’s *Beyond Fiction: The Recovery of the Feminine in the Novels of Cervantes* (1984), and the more recent book by Diana de Armas Wilson entitled *Allegories of Love: Cervantes’s “Persiles and Sigismunda”* (1991).

8. Howard Mancing is one of the few critics who have commented on the significance of chapter 15 in connection with the events of the preceding sections of the narrative. Mancing sees this chapter—much as I do—as a burlesque re-enactment of idealized notions of love (see *The Chivalric World* 57–62).

9. The studies in animal physiognomy gathered by Giambattista della Porta document the enormous success that these forms of superimposition of animals and men enjoyed at the turn of the century. Baltrušaitis (*Aberrations*) mentions six Naples editions of della Porta’s work between 1588 and 1612, plus two other early editions in Hannover (1593) and Brussels (1601). The technique was frequently used to develop allegorical iconographies but was also occasionally utilized in caricatures such as Dürer’s Politian-Rhinoceros (1515), one of the drawings included in della Porta’s book. Baltrušaitis describes the image as follows: “Dürer’s rhinoceros (1515) is reproduced contra, its horn having no apparent relationship with Politian’s prominent nose” (12). Dürer’s caricature evokes Quevedo’s well-known satirical sonnet against his literary rival Góngora in which the latter is compared with an elephant.

10. In his engaging interpretation of the cave of Montesinos episode in *Grotesque Purgatory* (1996), Sullivan calls attention to Don Quixote’s feelings of impotence, or at the very least inadequacy, in response to the demands of the material world (and indeed material women) (see especially chapter 4).

11. For more on the significance of Don Quixote’s dream in the cave of Montesinos, see de Armas Wilson’s article “Cervantes and the Night Visitors: Dream Work in the Cave of Montesinos.”

12. On the demystifying potential of laughter, see Bakhtin's *Rabelais*.

13. In his 1995 book *Refiguring Authority*, Michael Gerli cites Colonge, Mas, Osuna, and Arco and Garay, among those who have attributed anti-*morisco* sentiments to Cervantes. According to Gerli, those anti-*morisco* sentiments "need not be identified with Cervantes [...] they are likely strategies of irony deployed to call attention to the plight of the *Moriscos* and, at the same time, distance and camouflage personal sentiments" (58).

Chapter Five

Persiles, or The Cervantine Art of Looking Down and Awry

1. All quotations of *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* are from the 1997 edition by Carlos Romero.

2. Helena Percas de Ponseti focuses on this connection between literature and painting in her book on *Don Quixote* entitled *Cervantes the Writer and Painter of "Don Quixote"* (1988).

3. All references to *El licenciado vidriera* are from *Novelas ejemplares*, vol. 2, ed. Harry Sieber (1990).

4. See footnotes 6 and 7 in Romero's edition. According to Romero, the source of most sixteenth- and seventeenth-century allusions to the man who fell in love with a banana is Eliano.

5. Michael Nerlich ("*Los trabajos*" and "*Die Macht*") has recently pointed out that *Persiles* defies Counter-Reformation policy in more than one way, including the fact that the lovers are finally united by a simple "matrimonio de manos," which eludes Counter-Reformation ceremony and institutional settings.

6. All biblical quotes are from the New International Version in *The New Layman's Parallel Bible*.

7. As Williamsen says: "The meaning of Paul's words is clear: if one cannot resist the needs of the flesh, one should marry rather than burn in Hell (or, as here, with the flames of unfulfilled desire). The exploration of Policarpo's predicament seems to question the implications of the statement. His motive for marriage, the appeasement of his lust, and his use of deception to realize his goal are presented ironically. [...] The treatment of the incident may be regarded as subversive" (144).

8. This "three-dimensional" image reminds us of Julián Gállego's description of an anamorphosis (or "simultaneous painting," as he calls it), which is alluded to in Espinosa y Malo's *Ocios morales* (see Gállego 113).

9. For more on the workings of double-voicedness along these lines, see Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*.

Chapter Six

A “Symptomatic” View of the Honor System in Cervantes’s Theater

1. Žižek illustrates this concept by recalling a Marxist reading of the ideal of universal freedom in bourgeois society, which focuses on the “symptomatic” position of a member of the proletariat who is forced to sell his own labor: “by selling his labour ‘freely,’ the worker *loses* his freedom—the real content of this free act of sale is the worker’s enslavement to capital. The crucial point is, of course, that it is precisely this paradoxical freedom, the form of its opposite, which closes the circle of ‘bourgeois freedoms’” (“How Did Marx?” 22).

2. See Joaquín Casaldueño, *Sentido y forma del teatro de Cervantes*.

3. It is important to note that I am not referring to “real women” or “real Jews or Muslims”; rather, what I have in mind is allegorical images of gender and racial difference.

4. We need to keep in mind that the nobiliary ideals represented in the *comedia* do not necessarily correspond to the reality of social life. The following anecdote gathered by Ortega y Gasset provides a rather contrasting view: “—Prendieron a un hombre porque le hallaron dando a una mujer de bofetadas, y a él y a ella los llevaron a la cárcel. Visitóse el lunes, y sacándolos a los dos, habiendo escrito contra él mil disparates, como lo hacen siempre esta gente farisea, pidió el hombre licencia de hablar, y dijo: ‘Señores, yo soy casado y con seis hijos. Salí antes de ayer desesperado de casa, por no tener con qué poderlos sustentar, y pasando por la calle de esta mujer, me llamó desde una ventana, y diciéndome ella dentro le había parecido bien, me ofreció un doblón de a cuatro si condescendía con ella y la despicaba, siendo esto por decirla yo que era pobre. Era un escudo de oro el precio de cada ofensa de Dios. Gané tres, desmayando al cuarto de flaqueza y hambre. Quísome quitar el doblón y no pudo, y a las voces llegó este alguacil que está presente y tuve mejores manos que ella para hacerlo. Suplico a V. S. diga ahora ella si esto es verdad o mentira.’ La cual allí en público dijo ser todo así, y visto por la sala, in continenti le hicieron volver el doblón de a cuatro en su presencia, al alguacil y le echaron libre y sin costas la puerta afuera, y a ella le mandaron tornar a su encierro para quitarle el rijo con algunos días de pan y agua. Fue esto así como lo cuento, lunes 5 de este mes. — Noviembre 14 de 1657 -III- 365” (*La deshumanización* 129).

5. If there is indeed a potentially “subversive” side to the archetype of the “manly woman” (“mujer varonil”), this would have more to do with the issue of cross-dressing that might lead to an understanding of gender as a matter of role play. Questions of transvestitism have often been discussed concerning Tirso’s plays. As we know, much of Tirso’s production focuses precisely on the problem of the female/male distinction. Charles Ganelin has recently analyzed Finea’s role in *La mujer por*

fuera from this perspective. He draws from Henry Sullivan (*Tirso*), William Forbes, and especially Anita Stoll, who is quoted as saying: “more than any other dramatist of his age did Tirso focus on the male/female distinction, with an eye toward questioning its most severe and rigid demarcation—this was done through multiple examples of transvestitism and supposed ‘abnormal’ psychological types” (qtd. in Ganelin 104).

6. All quotations from *El trato de Argel* are from Schevill and Bonilla’s edition of *Comedias y entremeses*, by Cervantes.

7. All quotations from *El laberinto de amor* are from Schevill and Bonilla’s edition of *Comedias y entremeses*, by Cervantes.

8. All quotations from *El retablo de las maravillas* are from Spadaccini’s edition of the *Entremeses*, by Cervantes.

9. For a comprehensive analysis of the phallic figures of the magic tableau and the spectators’ interaction with them, see part 2 of Molho’s *Cervantes: raíces folklóricas*.

10. Others have commented on the subversive aspects of *El retablo*, most recently Spadaccini in his edition of Cervantes’s *Entremeses*, Gerli in his article “*El retablo de las maravillas*: Cervantes’s ‘Arte nuevo de deshacer comedias,’” and Zimic in his ““El retablo de las maravillas’: parábola de la mentira.”

11. All quotations from *La gran sultana* are from Schevill and Bonilla’s edition of *Comedias y entremeses*, by Cervantes.

12. See Mirrer; see also Sicroff’s *Los estatutos*, especially 194–205.

13. De Armas Wilson reminds us of Francisco López de Gómara’s description of the lifestyle of the Amerindians in the province of Esmeraldas: “They live like sodomites, they talk like Moors, and they look like Jews” (qtd. in de Armas Wilson, “The Matter” 239).

14. For a detailed account of the folkloric sources of Cervantes’s interlude *El retablo de las maravillas*, most of which underscore the issue of social identification, see Molho’s *Cervantes: raíces folklóricas*, especially 46–105.

15. We may recall that passing soldiers were entitled to make use of commoners’ properties at will. Calderón offers an interesting dramatization of this situation in *El alcalde de Zalamea*. See also Molho (*Cervantes: raíces folklóricas* 168–69).

Conclusion

1. See Maravall’s *La oposición política bajo los Austrias*, *Estado moderno y mentalidad social*, *El mundo social de “La Celestina,” La picaresca desde la historia social*, *Utopía y contrautopía en el “Quijote,”* and *Velázquez y el espíritu de la modernidad*.

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